

An interview with Charles A. Purcell /

CHARLES A. PURCELL

An Interview Conducted by

William B. Pickett

July 3, 1981

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## NARRATOR DATA SHEET

07/03/81

DATE

Name of narrator: Charles A. Purcell <sup>46041</sup>

Address: 1555 N. Main Street, Frankfort, IN Phone: 317 - 859-1811

Birthdate: April 19, 1900 Birthplace: Brazil, Indiana

Length of residence in Terre Haute: From Fall, 1915 to Nov. 6, 1980

Education: Went to the 8th grade in Brazil. Went into coal mining at age 14. Took bookkeeping course at Wabash Commercial College in 1919 but did not complete the course.

Occupational history: 1914-16, Eppert #5 just south of Purth (Clay Co.); Crawford #12; /with father until 1918/ Liggett mine in West Terre Haute; Shirkieville; Jackson Hill #6 /Blackhawk one year/-he spent most of his time here--1916-1933 (west and south of Clinton, Vermillion Co.); 1933, burned keg of powder exploded in his hands (practically); 1933-45, did any work he could find but never on relief (cleaning house, hanging paper, wood working, house building. 1945, back in mine as mine foreman. 1945-49 Deputy State Fire Marshall under Ralph Gates administration. Jan., 1953-April, 1961, Dir. Indiana Bureau of Mines. 1969-1977, Director Bureau of Mines.

Special interests, activities, etc. Woodworking shop, fishing.

Did not have time to play golf and cards and so forth.

Major subject(s) of interview: Coal mining

No. of tapes: 2 Length of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Terms of legal agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interviewing sessions:

Date	Time	Location	Interviewer
07/03/81		Residence of Dode Purcell, brother of Narrator.	William B. Pickett

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CHARLES A. PURCELL

Tape 1

July 3, 1981

Residence of brother, Dode Purcell, 600 S. 21st St.  
Terre Haute, IN 47803

INTERVIEWER: William B. Pickett

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

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WBP: This is July 3, 1981. I'm William Pickett and I'm talking this morning with Mr. Charles A. Purcell, former director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines under the Republican administrations during the 20th Century. We are in Terre Haute, Indiana, and at the residence of your sister?

PURCELL: Dode. My brother.

WBP: Your brother, Mr. . . .

PURCELL: Dode, d-o-d-e [Purcell].

WBP: D-o-d-e , at 600 South 21st Street in Terre Haute.

Mr. Purcell, you moved to Terre Haute from Brazil, Indiana, in the fall of 1915 and you've been here ever since. You moved to Frankfort in November, 1980, to retire. And, as a child, you were a coal miner. Could you tell me a little bit about your father first of all? Was he a miner?

PURCELL: Yes, my father's been a miner practically all of his life. And back when I started in the mine, the only skill or rule was just you have to work on a permit for two years with a qualified miner and then you can go back and get your miner's license. Well, I didn't . . . I worked with my father then until I was . . . 'til about 1918, about four years. And he took another job in the mine and then I . . .

My father was a coal miner all his life. And all of us boys . . . I have four brothers and those four boys couldn't wait to go in the coal mine. But I always said [that] I didn't want to go in the coal mine. And I finished the eight grades at the age of 13; and I tried to get a job here, there and yonder and couldn't find any factory work or anything like that. So, my dad came home one day and said, "That boy's too big to eat and not work so get him some bank clothes." They called 'em bank clothes in those days.

WBP: Explain what you mean by "bank."

PURCELL: Well, they always said . . . they always referred to a coal mine as a coal bank. They never referred to it as a coal mine.

I could tell you a little story of one time that happened to my cousin if you'd be interested. He was down on the 8th Avenue beach. There used to be a beach on 8th Avenue, at the foot of 8th Avenue here in Terre Haute on the Wabash River. And he was strutting around there with the girls, and they asked him where he worked. He said, "I work in the bank." So, "Humpy" Nelson was there and he was a mule driver and he heard him. He said, "Yeah, that's right girls." He said, "He works in a coal bank, same place as I do!" (breaks into laughter)

WBP: (laughs heartily)

PURCELL: But . . . you'll have to excuse me. I get off the track.

WBP: That's all right. Go ahead. You're talking about your father and . . .

PURCELL: Yeah. And so . . .

WBP: So, they got you some bank clothes.

PURCELL: So, they got me some mine clothes and I started in the coal mine.

WBP: Now, what kind of clothes would that be?

PURCELL: Well, they . . . in them days they wore wool shirts because it absorbed the sweat and it was . . . you wouldn't take cold. And then that was before wash houses, too, you know. We had to come out of a mine, and sometimes we'd be . . . our clothes'd be wet. I know that first mine I worked at it was wet, and I'd get my mine clothes wet; and then I'd go home and on the way home, they'd . . . they would freeze. I've stood my mine britches . . . they'd stand up in the middle of the floor when I'd take them off.

WBP: No kidding?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: So you were very, very cold by the time you got home?

PURCELL: Oh, yes! In the wintertime you'd be real cold.

WBP: So, you'd wear . . . well, what? You'd wear kind of overalls?

PURCELL: Well, you'd . . . no, we wore mostly the duck, heavy duck. Bank pants, we called them.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: Regular mine clothes.

WBP: Were they specially made for miners?

PURCELL: Yes, they were a heavy duck.

WBP: Would they come up and wear a belt around them or would they just come up . . .

PURCELL: Yeah, you'd wear a belt.

WBP: . . . or would you have a bib?

PURCELL: No, now that . . . I wore overalls later on. But when I first started in the mine, they were just those mine . . . just around the belt. And you just had a short-sleeved shirt.

WBP: But it was a wool shirt?

PURCELL: It was wool.

WBP: Tell me about . . . you say "wet" in the mines. Do you mean there was water dripping down?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. There was mines that water would have to be pumped before you could work. But I never worked in very many real wet mines; but that one out there in that block coal, it was wet there.

WBP: All right.

Would your shirt get wet from sweat, too?

PURCELL: Yes. Your mine clothes would get wet with sweat, too. But your clothes would get wet in the knees, because you had to get down on your knees in the mine. Because that first mine I worked at, I worked in a 30-inch vein. It was only 30 inches high.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: And you had to do some doubling up to get in there.

WBP: I see. You mean the whole space you had to work in was 30 . . . my goodness!

PURCELL: They'd take up bottom to get the cars and . . . so a mule could get in, they'd take up bottom. But up where you worked, up at the head of the car, it was only 30 inches; and you had to double up. And you'd just wallow around in there on your knees or any way you could get around, see?

WBP: I see. You mean they'd put a shaft through and then the car and the mule would be in this shaft area?

PURCELL: No. As the entry . . . as they drove the entries and rooms . . . now the difference in an entry and a room -- the entries was narrower. And they turned rooms off of them and they [rooms] were wider. And the narrow places they paid yardage -- that was pick mining days. They paid yardage for that on top of the same price that you got for loading the coal. But when they'd put the track in to get your car in to the face, they took up enough bottom to lay the track; and that made more height where the mule had to . . . and the track was, see. And . . . but up above that, inside of that where you worked mining the coal . . .

WBP: I see. In the rooms you mean that were off to the side?

PURCELL: No. The track usually went down pretty near to the center of the room. And then you had to . . . sometimes you'd get far ahead of your . . . too far ahead and wouldn't have your . . . take up your bottoms and move the track up, you'd have to shove your coal back . . . have to shovel the coal twice to get it to the car.

WBP: I see, um hm.

O.K. So, it was laborious and cramped, sometimes worse.

PURCELL: Yes, you'd . . . I know when we'd be working doubled up. You'd be bended over all day long.

WBP: My goodness.

PURCELL: And we used to lay across the . . . we'd take a round crop or a half round crop, whatever we could get, and we'd lay it right in the small of our back. And we always called that taking the kink out of our backs.

WBP: I see. (laughs heartily)

PURCELL: And, boy, it helped! I still do that today.

WBP: Would you rub up and down to move it along with your back? Roll it back and forth.

PURCELL: Yeah. You'd roll it back and forth if there was anything that you could roll it.

WBP: Put your weight on it and then roll back and forth.

PURCELL: Oh, you'd be up . . . your back would be up like that, see?

WBP: Yeah. (laughs)

PURCELL: It would . . . it helped, too -- I'm telling you.

WBP: I bet it did.

Now, what are you thinking . . . which mine are you thinking about most when you tell me about the work that you're doing now? Is this true with all the mines or was this true mainly with . . .

PURCELL: No, that was true of the mines where I . . . most of the mines I worked in the Brazil area. Now, when we come to Terre Haute, the coal was a little higher -- about from four to five feet.

WBP: All right. So, this is . . . what you're talking about here is the mines that you worked in when you lived in Clay County?

When you lived in Clay County and Brazil, what was the address in Brazil? Do you remember that?

PURCELL: On East Jackson Street . . . do you know where Pell's market is?

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: Well, there's a street goes south right there where the entrance goes into Pell's. And we lived the first house south on that street. It faced the south at that block. There's where we lived when we come to Terre Haute.

WBP: This is the first house south of the Old National Road?

PURCELL: Yes, it would be, the first house south. We had to cross the alley.

WBP: On the west or the east side?

PURCELL: On the north side of the road. Well, on the west side of that road. Because there was nothing . . . there wasn't any houses over on the other side at that time. That's where the Eagles ball park was built.

WBP: I see. O.K.

And how would you get back and forth to the mine? What means of transportation?

PURCELL: Oh, boy, that's something else.

We would walk . . . of a morning we had to get up about 3 o'clock. And we'd walk to Brazil and we'd catch a miners' train, and we'd ride out 'til they'd come to the road that the mine was on. We'd get off there. And we had a mile and a half to walk to the mine. And then we got down to . . . underneath the ground we had a mile to walk under the ground. If we was lucky, we might get a ride. Because if there was any cars there, they'd take

PURCELL: a man trip. But if there wasn't, we had that mile to walk underground. And we had to repeat that at night.

But at night if the miners' train was on time, they used to be a Highlander -- you know, the inter-urban went through. And it always stopped there at the railroad tracks, you know. Well, we were permitted to jump on that Highlander and then ride up to what they called the World's Fair switch. That was the switch that went into the Weavers' clay plant. And then we'd jump off when they stopped for that crossing. We'd stand there in the back of the car and jump off there.

WBP: Why did they call it the Highlander?

PURCELL: Well, they called it the Highlander because it was a limited. It only stopped . . . it didn't stop only just at stations.

WBP: I see. Was it an express train?

PURCELL: Yeah. It was supposed to be a fast transportation between Terre Haute and Indianapolis.

WBP: But they would let you get on some . . .

PURCELL: Yeah, but when it stopped for those railroad crossings, they'd let you get on. You'd pay your fare and you had to get off at another railroad crossing or else go to Greencastle or someplace where they had a regular stop.

WBP: I see. Uh-huh. But you felt lucky to . . .

PURCELL: Oh, we was lucky. And we was always hoping that the Highlander hadn't passed yet. And if it had gone, why we just took out that . . . oh, it was two or three mile, I guess, from out there down to that in the west end of Brazil where we had to catch the train.

WBP: Uh-huh. So, you would go . . . all right.

Would the Highlander only have one car or would there be more than one?

PURCELL: There was just the one car.

WBP: There'd just be one car.

PURCELL: One car.

WBP: Would there be a lot of people on it?

PURCELL: Yes. It was usually pretty well crowded.

WBP: And what time of the day was this?

PURCELL: Well, that would be along . . . along around . . . somewhere around 5 o'clock in the evening.

WBP: That would be on the way home then?

PURCELL: Yeah, that would be on . . . that would be on the way home. There was no car or anything we could catch as early as we had to get down to . . .

WBP: O.K. How many hours then would you work a day?

PURCELL: Well, we worked for 8 hours. But we put in nearly 12 to get that eight.

WBP: It took you two hours to get there and two hours to get home.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Is that what you mean, by working 12 hours?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And there was no wash . . . there was no bath house?

PURCELL: No wash houses then.

WBP: What about the pay?

PURCELL: Well, if the mines worked, we could make fairly good money by . . . but they was paid by the ton. You loaded by the ton. It wasn't day work. There was day work, too. They paid the drivers and those kind of . . . track layers and so forth.

WBP: Shot firers?

PURCELL: Yeah, and shot firers. Well, they didn't have shot firers. We fired our own shots when I first started.

WBP: Is that right?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Did they have a fire boss?

PURCELL: Yes. They'd have a fire boss. He'd make . . . but he made the mine, you know, before we'd enter of a morning.

WBP: O.K. So, and this is . . . you're talking about the Eppert 5 mine and the Crawford 12 . . .

PURCELL: Yes. That's right.

WBP: . . . in these cases? All right.

Which did you spend the most of your time in -- the Eppert 5 or the Crawford 12?

PURCELL: I think it was about equal time. I worked at those four mines in about two years' time. Then when I went to Jackson Hill 6, then I was there for a long time, see.

WBP: O.K. Now . . . and that was after you moved to West Terre Haute though? I mean after you moved to Terre Haute.

PURCELL: That was after I moved to Terre Haute, yes.

WBP: Did you join the union?

PURCELL: Oh, yes! Yes, we were all . . . they were always . . .

WBP: Did you have to join the union before you could mine even as a young boy?

PURCELL: Yes. Yeah, we would . . . we always belonged to the union.

WBP: Do you remember strikes when you were working in the mines in Brazil?

PURCELL: Not really. I don't remember any big strikes there. But the one that I remember the most is 1922, we had a five months' strike.

WBP: All right. Go ahead.

PURCELL: And I was . . . is that all right?

WBP: Go ahead with that.

PURCELL: I worked for . . . working in Jackson Hill 6 then. We had this five months' strike in '22, and I was planning to get married that fall. And I built me a . . . I built a house . . . or helped build a house to get . . . to go to housekeeping in when I got married.

WBP: And that house was located where?

PURCELL: Thirty-two oh one [3201] North 16th Street.

WBP: In Terre Haute?

PURCELL: In Terre Haute. I got a contractor and I was supposed to help him so he wouldn't have to . . . . And he gave me a good deal on the house. I just barely got that house finished up in time to get married October 21. The mine just . . . I had got one pay in. They just started up . . . just one pay is all I got in before I got married.

WBP: Why did they go on strike?

PURCELL: Oh, they were striking for better conditions, more money and so forth.

WBP: What did you do? How did you get along during the strike?

PURCELL: I just . . . well, that summer I just worked on the house, mostly. I had a little money saved that I could use to pay my board, and we didn't spend much money back in those days either.

WBP: Where were you living before you were married?

PURCELL: At 3225 North 16th -- right next door to this house [lot] where I built the house.

WBP: In a rooming house?

PURCELL: No, that was my father's home. I lived with my father and my mother.

WBP: On North 16th.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: I see, the same half block.

PURCELL: Right. It was right next door. There was one vacant lot between them and the lot that I had.

WBP: I see. O.K.

What mining companies had the Eppert 5 and the Crawford 12? Do you remember?

PURCELL: Crawford 12, I don't know what . . . well, all ever I knew was the Crawford Coal Company there. And Eppert's, I guess it was the Eppert Coal Company. Man name of Eppert run that mine.

WBP: Probably so. All right.

And is the same thing true about the Liggett mine? That was owned by a man named Liggett?

PURCELL: That was . . . I think that was the Vandalia Coal Company that run Liggett mine.

WBP: And where was that located?

PURCELL: West of West Terre Haute.

WBP: In Vigo County?

PURCELL: In Vigo County.

WBP: And then, of course, Shirkieville was in Fayette County, right? I mean Fayette Township in Vigo County.

PURCELL: Now, Shirkieville is still in Vigo County. It's south of the Vermillion County line and then right north of it about a mile is where the county line was.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: And "Easytown," Bickett's #1 and Jackson Hill 6 was in Vermillion County, 'cause they were the other side of the county line.

WBP: All right.

WBP: I have someplace a plat . . . . oh, here it is.

BREAK IN THE RECORDING

WBP: Before I forget it, when did your father come to . . .

PURCELL: (sneezed) Hm. Excuse me. I don't know what's the matter with me, sneezing.

WBP: Was your father born in the United States?

PURCELL: He was born at Stilesville [Indiana]. That's over east of Brazil.

WBP: All right.

And what is his nationality?

PURCELL: He was American, just a Hoosier. I always . . . he always said he was just a Hoosier.

WBP: His parents were also . . . were English . . . of English descent?

PURCELL: I really don't know what grandpa's . . . where he . . . where they originated from.

WBP: As far as you know then, you're just all-American, right?

PURCELL: All-American. My mother came from England.

WBP: Um hm. Purcell, I think is an English name, isn't it?

PURCELL: Well, there's something else. There was, oh, some Catholic organization sent me a coat of arms one time. And they told me, telling me all about the coat of arms and everything and telling me about the Purcell name. And they said that the Purcell name was an Irish name. They went so far as to say it was more Irish than the Irish themselves. (chuckles)

WBP: Is that right?

PURCELL: And . . . I still got that old coat of arms up at the home there.

WBP: Well, maybe so. That's a thought.

PURCELL: And it was interesting to see it and all. But I always thought it was a French name by the sound of it, so I really don't know where we originated.

WBP: All right.

When you were . . . as a young boy up in Clay County, did you remember where the people were from that were the miners? Were they Irish or were they . . .

PURCELL: Oh, they were all nationalities. They . . . a lot of them came from England and a lot of them came from France. And there was a lot of Slavish and Polish and Italians. They came from all over. Italy . . .

WBP: And they were all members of the union, the UMW?

PURCELL: Well, most of them were. There weren't very many mines that was non-union. There was a few smaller mines.

WBP: So, when you first remember mining, you remember that the mines were organized already?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: Unionized?

PURCELL: Yes. I didn't know of anything but organization in the mine.

WBP: O.K. And . . . did you ever see any blacks in the mines?

PURCELL: There were blacks that worked in the mine, but I'm just trying to think . . . I don't think I ever worked in a coal mine where there were blacks working.

WBP: All right.

PURCELL: But there was a lot of them that rode the miners' train and worked on farther out from where I worked.

WBP: Were they union members ?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

WBP: So, the union did not exclude blacks from those things?

PURCELL: No, no. Oh, no. No, they insisted on you belonging to the union if you worked in a mine.

WBP: It was just a matter of company policy if they . . . . They could hire blacks if they wanted to.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And the blacks, if they were members of the union, would get the same wages that the . . .

PURCELL: Yeah. Yeah.

WBP: . . . all the rest of the union got.

PURCELL: That's right.

WBP: All right. So, O.K.

First, you worked in the Liggett mine. Do you remember how long?

PURCELL: I would say maybe three or four months. It wasn't very long until we got a job at Shirkieville.

WBP: Now, are all these mines shaft mines?

PURCELL: They were shaft mines, yes.

WBP: So, then you went to Shirkieville. And you were there for how long?

PURCELL: Well there again about four or five months. And we were two years at those . . . of all those places up 'til I went to Jackson Hill 6.

WBP: All right. Now, in the Liggett mine, was there any national group that was dominant in that mine?

PURCELL: Oh, I don't know that there was any. I don't remember that, any particular group that was . . .

WBP: O.K. What about Shirkieville? Was there a national group that was dominant?

PURCELL: Well, there was a good many foreigners there 'cause they lived there at Shirkieville.

WBP: Which country?

PURCELL: Well, there again they were mixed up. I didn't know just . . . they just always referred to them as being foreigners, you know. And I didn't know what . . .

WBP: I've heard that there were Italians mainly in Shirkieville.

PURCELL: Yes, there were some Italians there.

WBP: O.K. Then you went to Jackson Hill 6, and you spent most of your time there . . .

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: . . . from 1916 to 1933. Was there an ethnic or a national group that was dominant there?

PURCELL: Well, I would say at Jackson Hill 6 they was mostly American. It was . . . they was some foreigners but not too many.

WBP: O.K. And it was owned by what company?

PURCELL: The Jackson Hill Coal and Coke Company.

WBP: Located . . . where was that?

PURCELL: It was . . . the office was in Terre Haute.

WBP: All right. And do you know what . . . the men . . . who were the owners?

PURCELL: Yes, the Kolsems, J. C. Kolsem and then . . .

WBP: Spell . . . how do you spell that?

PURCELL: K-o-l-s-e-m. And then his . . . then when old J. C. died, he had a son Charlie Kolsem. And he took over the mine -- running the mine.

WBP: Was it a privately-owned coal company or was there a . . . was it incorporated?

PURCELL: Well, I don't know how many people might have been interested, but we always referred to him as J. C. Kolsem running the mine at Jackson Hill 6.

WBP: O.K. What was the . . . of these mines you've worked in so far, what was the biggest mine? Which mine hired the most employees, had more operations going on?

PURCELL: That produced the most coal?

WBP: Um hm.

PURCELL: Well, I expect Jackson Hill produced about as much coal as any mine that I worked in. They had a record there around 2,000 ton a day, and sometimes they'd go over that. And it was about as big a producing mine as was . . . that I had worked in up 'til then.

But now there's mines that had produced more than that since then. The Green Valley Mine, for instance, now they produce more coal than that and . . .

WBP: Was this during the same time period?

PURCELL: What?

WBP: When you say the Green Valley Mine, are you talking about . . .

PURCELL: No. That wasn't the same time period. No, it was a little later on when it came into being.

WBP: Do you know what the markets were for the coal that was produced in these mines?

PURCELL: Well, most of our coal went to the railroads. They went . . . our coal was taken into Chicago and the railroad handled most of the coal. It was for steam, you know. This was back in the day of steam engines then.

WBP: In the Jackson Hill mine was there any specific railroad that used more than others?

PURCELL: Well, yes. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul. It was off that railroad where the switch was, and they took . . . the most of their coal went right on out to the main line and went to Chicago.

WBP: I see. O.K.

What about working conditions? Where were the working conditions best of the mines that you worked in?

PURCELL: Well, Jackson Hill 6 was by far the better mine as far as air was concerned when we first went there because it was a new mine and the ventilation was better there than most any of the mines. Now, Shirkieville was terrible. You . . . after shooting and all, why it was awful and you'd get sick. And then Jackson Hill got . . . when it got in there after so many years, why it got pretty bad, too. The smoke, it couldn't get out . . . get it out, you know, quick enough.

WBP: You couldn't get it ventilated?

PURCELL: No. Especially if they worked . . . if they worked two days in a row.

WBP: Tell me a little bit about . . . you'd go to work . . . when you were working at the Jackson Hill, would you again work an 8-hour day there?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: And how would you get from your house up to the mine?

PURCELL: Oh, we rode a miners' train.

WBP: Where would you get on that?

PURCELL: Well, we boarded the miners' train at Grover, that little . . . where the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad crosses Lafayette Avenue. Well, there used to be a little station there, and they called it Grover Station. And we . . . there was a waiting room there and we could go there and wait, but I never waited. I'd wait 'til I'd hear the train leave Maple Avenue; then I'd start up . . . I'd get down there about the time the train did.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: (laughs) I timed it with the train.

WBP: You bet. So you didn't have to wait.

PURCELL: I hardly ever went into the waiting room because it was so filled with smoke and all and I couldn't take it.

WBP: Maybe from people smoking cigars?

PURCELL: Yeah, cigars and cigarettes and pipes and (laughs) everything else. And they had a non-smoker that was on the train. There was one car that was a non-smoker, and that's the car I always rode.

WBP: You never did smoke then?

PURCELL: No.

WBP: Why not? Everybody else did.

PURCELL: Well, I'll say I never did. I did when I was a kid. I smoked grape leaves and corn silks and these here cigars, we used to call 'em -- these (laughs) catalpa trees things and anything that would make smoke. But I quit one time when I got mad at the kid that I was riding with . . . or went to school with. And he always managed to have some tobacco. And he had some of these little cheroots, they called them. Cigars, little bitty fellows. And we got out of school one day and . . . Johnson Dairy, it was northeast of Brazil there. They'd been in town that day and bought 'em a new wagon to haul their dairy products into town. And they was pulling this old wagon behind them. So, we jumped that wagon, got up on the seat; and we was sitting there to ride on out to where we lived, you know, east. And we got in an argument on who's gonna sit on the right-hand side and operate the brake, you know, and be the commander of that vehicle, so to speak.

And he was a kid that . . . he just got over anything right quick. And I didn't get over . . . if I had a little tiff or anything, I didn't get over it quite so quick. So (laughs) he got over it in a little bit and he said, "Here, have a cigar." I said, "No, I quit." I was still miffed at him, see.

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: And by golly, I did quit! I never smoked anything from (laughs) that day to this.

WBP: Did you decide it was just better for you?

PURCELL: I got to thinking . . . after I had been . . . went a week, I thought, "Gee whiz, it's been a week since I smoked. That was good," I thought, you know. And then two weeks, I said "Well, it's been two weeks." And I'd dream sometimes that I'd smoke, and when I'd wake up, I'd seen that I hadn't smoked and I was so tickled over it. And I (laughs) just never did smoke any more.

WBP: I see. So you didn't want to be controlled by that?

PURCELL: No. I never did want to be controlled by anything, any habit.

WBP: Yes. I see.

PURCELL: I was always . . . I always was commander. (laughs)

WBP: You wanted to be in charge of your own destiny.

PURCELL: You bet your life!

WBP: Well, that's . . . .

But the working conditions you say in the mine . . . in the Jackson Hill mine might have been the best and you worked 8 hours and you got on the train . . . got on the train at Grover . . .

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: . . . and you'd stay . . . it'd take you right to the Jackson Hill 6 mine?

PURCELL: Yes. There would be another train . . . they would cut the cars off there at Libertyville. And another engine would pick 'em up and take 'em down to the mine.

WBP: What time would you go in the morning?

PURCELL: Well, we had to get up at 5 o'clock and the train . . . the miners' train left down here at Maple Avenue around 6 [a.m.]. And then we'd catch it at Grover.

WBP: Um hm. And then you'd come home at what time?

PURCELL: We got home around 5 o'clock in the evening.

WBP: O.K.

Did you like mining?

PURCELL: Oh, I never did want to go in the mine but after I got in the mine, I didn't mind it -- not near as much as I thought I would. I just figured that was gonna be my life, I had to make the best of it. And that's the reason I went . . . tried right away to make my mine foreman and fire boss license so I could become a foreman.

WBP: That's . . . what was the difference in your work between being just a miner and a foreman?

PURCELL: What was what now?

WBP: What would you do as a foreman that you didn't do when you were a miner?

PURCELL: Oh! Well, as a miner, you didn't load the coal. You just went around over the mine . . .

WBP: As a miner, you did load coal?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

WBP: But as a foreman you did not?

PURCELL: No. No, you don't load coal as a foreman. And you . . . we had to tour the mine. The law said that every other . . . that the working place, there had to be a boss to that working place every other day the mine was worked. And I would go . . . one day I would make one side of the mine, go into places and check to see the men had their timbers up and caution them if they didn't, to set their timbers and so forth, and to see that they stayed on course. I'd have to sight their places sometimes and stuff like that, you know.

WBP:            To see that they were staying right on the vein, you mean?

PURCELL:        Huh?

WBP:            To see that they stayed in the direction that they were supposed to go?

PURCELL:        Yes. Yes. You see they had the sights set. And some of them wouldn't . . . they got a little dilatory and they wouldn't run their sights and they'd get off course.

WBP:            Would they use a compass?

PURCELL:        No. They just used sights. They had two spads that hung from a roof. And you'd look over them spads and he'd hold a light up.

WBP:            Just light the sights of a gun?

PURCELL:        Yeah, just like the sight of a gun. And you'd line 'em up there. And then you'd go up and measure from that over and see how much it was off sight.

WBP:            I see.

PURCELL:        And then if he was off sight one way, you'd mark where he had to leave on on this side and go that way more.

WBP:            I see.

PURCELL:        And sometime you had to mark on because it was too wide, too. They'd . . . some of 'em just hogged out and would take all the pillars because they could make more coal in a wider place, see.

WBP:            Well, what would happen then? Why did you . . . why was that bad?

PURCELL:        Well, because if . . . the more you went over here, the more you'd rob the other fella coming alongside of it.

WBP:            I see.

PURCELL:        They've been known to cut a place out that way, a room on either side of a room. Say this fella come over to the left too far and

PURCELL: this fella come over to the right, there wouldn't be enough left in between there for the room . . . well, maybe it caved in or something and it was behind and . . .

WBP: So, as a foreman, you were responsible to see that each person had . . . each miner had a fair amount of coal to load?

PURCELL: No. No, it was up to him how much he loaded because he . . . some of 'em would load the turn every day, whatever the turn might be. And they'd have coal stocked back in the timbers a lot of times. When they'd run out of coal at the face, they could drop back there and load that. And then the others, they didn't figure only on making one or two cars, you know. It would just depend on the miner.

WBP: What do you mean by turn?

PURCELL: Well, they took . . . they had a turn. Every man was supposed to get the same amount of cars, if he wanted 'em, see. And the turn wouldn't run very many sometimes; maybe four or five cars would be as much as the turn would run.

WBP: You mean . . . who would determine the turn?

PURCELL: Well, it . . . the motorman or the driver, whoever the case may be. Now, at Jackson Hill 6, they had one mule in that mine when I first went there. And they didn't keep it very long. And then it was all motor haulage.

WBP: Electric motor?

PURCELL: Yes. The battery motors did the gathering; they went into the face and pulled the coal out to a partner. And then when they'd get there, they'd pick it up with a big motor and had a trolley. And they pulled that . . . they'd take it to the bottom then -- to the bottom of the mine where they'd put it on the cage and hoist it.

WBP: Um hm. But each man was entitled to the same number of cars?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: O.K. Now, who would determine the total number of cars? The mine boss or the mine superintendent?

PURCELL: Well, just the system . . . . You know, if . . . now say maybe some days they wouldn't . . . maybe there's some fella's shots wouldn't work and maybe the turn would go one or two more than what it was the other days. You see, it just . . . everything . . . each day governed itself for one happening or another.

WBP: I see. It depended on what had happened the previous day and so forth.

PURCELL: Yes. Yes.

WBP: But the mine superintendent decided how much coal he would like to produce in that mine. And that's how many . . . what? How many miners he would hire and how many cars he would have available to the mine?

PURCELL: Yeah. The mine foreman had the control over how many men he'd hire and put to work and so forth.

WBP: Oh, he would?

PURCELL: Yes. Yes.

WBP: The mine foreman?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: You did, in other words?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: Were you working for . . . who did you work for? Who was your boss?

PURCELL: Well, they'd have a superintendent, you see, of the mine. And I was . . . worked under the superintendent. And they had a mine boss.

WBP: And each shift had a foreman?

PURCELL: Well, now when I first started they didn't have but one shift. Well, they had . . . all they did on the night shift was deliver powder and run curtains and check the ventilation and so forth.

PURCELL: They just had two or three men do that at night. They never worked . . . produced coal. But now later on, they got to . . . they got so they'd produce coal at least on two shifts. And some places, they'd work three shifts and produce coal . . . or load coal on three shifts.

WBP: Um hm. But each . . . but the shift that had working coal miners on it would have to have a foreman? There was only one foreman at the Jackson Hill?

PURCELL: Well, no. I was the only . . . they called 'em . . . the mine foreman, he was in charge of the mine. And then what my job -- first job -- was what they called a "room boss." And then we went inside and made the rooms and did this checking and so forth, like I said before.

And then I was made the foreman of the mine later on. I was the mine foreman.

WBP: O.K.

Were you management then? Were you a member of management?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. Yes, they . . .

WBP: You were not considered to be . . .

PURCELL: No. Back in that day you couldn't belong to the union if you was a foreman.

WBP: I see. You had belonged to the union and you became a foreman, then you had to drop your membership?

PURCELL: Yes, sir. Yeah, they wouldn't . . . they wouldn't let a boss belong to the union.

WBP: So, you could never do anything but be foreman then or mine boss once you dropped your membership?

PURCELL: But if you got out of a job as a mine boss, why you wanted to go back to the face, they called it, why you could get back in the union all right, then.

WBP: I see. O.K.

PURCELL: But you had to drop your union card when you started as a foreman 'cause they paid by the month.

WBP: O.K.

Now tell me, at the Jackson Hill, how many tons of coal could the average miner load in a day?

PURCELL: Well, there was really no . . . there was really no limit. I'm trying to think.

WBP: He could load as much as he wanted to?

PURCELL: Yes. If you'd get the cars, you could load as much as you wanted to load and that you had coal to load.

WBP: If you could get the cars?

PURCELL: Yes. If you could get the cars to put it in, yeah.

I know when I . . . one time when I was working at Jackson Hill 6, there was another young kid. I was only . . . let's see, about 18. Eighteen, something like that. And we would . . . it would be nip and tuck for him and I to see who'd lead the sheet.

WBP: What did that mean, "lead the sheet"?

PURCELL: Well, they have . . . they'd post a sheet at night [that] showed how many cars you'd load and what each car weighed and so forth. And then you'd total that up to see how many tons you'd loaded that day. And he and I never . . . we never turned down a car. So, I've seen 'em push as many as three cars in our places at one time 'cause we always had coal stored back and we'd just load . . . (laughs) we'd go from one to the other and load 'em.

WBP: But tell me, what's the most you ever loaded then in one day?

PURCELL: The most I ever loaded in one day was 42 ton.

WBP: No kidding!

PURCELL: Yes, sir.

WBP: (whistles) How old were you? Eighteen?  
Nineteen?

PURCELL: I was (pause) . . . I think I was about 20 years old then. That was down in Blackhawk /southeastern Vigo County/. And what happened that day, I was working in a room and my brother was driving the entry, the main entry. And they . . . he was going to take a job night bossing down at the Blackhawk mine. And the boss gave me his entry. So, he told me that day, he said, "Well, I'm going to skin up today." He said, "You won't need to come up here . . . go up to the entry to make coal." He said, "I'll go ahead and do the drilling just so." He was going to then tamp the holes and all. He said, "You stay down there and try to get all your coal loaded." And I didn't think I had that much coal, but the coal was a little higher there and the room wasn't very deep. I just had turned that room off of another room. But I had coal about so deep all over that area. And I just kept a-loadin' and loadin' and when the night come, I had 21 cars loaded that day and they averaged 2 ton a car. I didn't . . . I didn't build 'em up or nothin', didn't chunk 'em. I just rounded 'em up and let 'em go at that. I loaded 42 ton of coal that day.

WBP: How much did you get for that? How much money?

PURCELL: What?

WBP: How much money did you get?

PURCELL: Ooooooh, I forget what they was paying at that time. That was back in /19/20. I forget just what they was paying a ton. But I made a darned good wage.

WBP: Meaning what? About what would be a darned good wage?

PURCELL: Well, I think the biggest . . . I was trying to think the biggest pay I ever drew there. (pause) That's pretty hard for . . . I can't remember what they was paying. Isn't that funny? I used to . . .

WBP: Do . . . can you remember a general amount?  
I mean just approximately?

PURCELL: Oh, we . . . it was nothing . . . we could make over a hundred dollars a pay.

WBP: And you got paid how often?

PURCELL: Every two weeks. Or twice a month really what it was, used to be. Then finally they got it down to where they paid every two weeks. I don't know how they're paying now.

WBP: O.K.

Could you usually get enough cars? Could a person get enough cars?

PURCELL: Well, sometimes . . . sometimes we got all we wanted to load. It just depended on the mine and how the . . . how it was situated. Some places they would get so many men and a driver . . . . One driver or motorman or whatever would have so many that he couldn't get around to all of 'em to give 'em more than maybe two or three cars.

WBP: So, it depended upon management? Management decisions?

PURCELL: Yes. That's right.

WBP: Um hm.

Were there any strikes because people . . . the miners felt they couldn't get enough cars?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah. There were always disputes over the turn and this, that and the other. They'd get you out of turn, behind on a turn, and they would be gripin' about that.

WBP: I'm not sure . . . I'm still not clear about what the "turn" is. Is that . . .

PURCELL: Well, that . . . the turn is how many cars. You see, they was supposed to give you these cars in turn.

WBP: I see. Every miner got a car and . . .

PURCELL: Yeah. Now, if it was the driver and he just pulled one or two loads out, he'd take this man and this man's two cars and he'd give cars maybe to

PURCELL: the next two. He'd bring in two empties and he'd take out two loads or one . . . . Some places the driver only hooked onto one car and took one car out. And he brought one car back in each time. And he'd give that to another man. And then he did that all the way around to all of these men.

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: And when it was your turn, you watched that.

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: And (chuckles) sometimes the driver would get . . . he wanted to make . . . have a friend there and he'd want to accommodate him or something, you know -- give him a car ahead of turn -- why he'd do it. And then if the other fella noticed it, why he'd yell about it.

WBP: You bet he would!

PURCELL: You see!

WBP: Uh-huh.

PURCELL: Excuse me, I didn't know that was on that.

WBP: That's all right.

O.K. I understand it now. It's clear to me now.

PURCELL: Yeah?

WBP: Yeah.

PURCELL: I know these terms is hard for a man that never worked in . . .

WBP: That's right.

PURCELL: But they're so . . . everyday talk with a miner, you know. They know what you're talking about.

WBP: What was the most typical source of unhappiness in the mine among the miners? Against management? What was their most important complaint usually, most common complaint?

PURCELL: Oh, I don't know of any . . . if they didn't get their track laid on time . . . you know, they'd get behind with their track sometimes and they'd have to shove their coal back. They couldn't get their cars up so far and they'd be so far ahead of their track, and they'd be griping about that, too. Oh, there'd be any number of things that they could holler about.

WBP: What was your attitude toward the union when you became foreman? Did you feel that the union . . .

PURCELL: Oh, yes. I was a union man at heart.

WBP: Were you?

PURCELL: Sure!

WBP: Did you feel that the union represented the miners very well?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. I sure do! Yes, I think the union . . . now there's things I think that wasn't . . . there was times when I thought the union was wrong. And I've had . . . I've had to make decisions that way when I was in the Indiana Bureau of Mines. You see when I became director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines, I was between the two fires. I had the men on the one side that was always wanting you to favor them and the company on the other side. But I tried to stay right square in the middle and insist on the law right straight down the line. And I . . . I would tell either side if they . . . if I thought they was away from the law.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 1-SIDE 2

WBP: O.K. You say that you tried to make sure that you walked a straight course, so that you obeyed the law and that both the . . .

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: . . . miners and the unions and the management both understood where you were, that you were being fair to both. Go ahead.

PURCELL: I know one time out at the Green Valley mine, they had a strike out there over a man that refused to cut a breakthrough. And they had an awful uproar over that. And . . .

WBP: Why did he refuse to cut a breakthrough?

PURCELL: Well, he said it was too far . . . or he refused to cut the straightplace rather, instead of the breakthrough.

You see, you go every so far -- every 45 feet was the law then -- and you're supposed to make a breakthrough. That's so that this last hole can be closed up and that'll bring the ventilation up to closer to where the men work. And this man and the foreman had been . . . well, they'd been at loggerheads with one another for a good while. And the foreman come along, and the man was filing bits out on the entry. And the foreman said to him -- just in passing -- he said, "Be sure and cut that straightplace -- the one here -- when you go in there." And the . . . I don't know, the guy said something like this to him: "I will like hell," or something like that. And the foreman just kept on a-goin'; he said, "Well, you will or else." And he just picked up his bucket and went home.

And so then they said that he fired the man. And they struck over it. And they . . . oh, they had an awful mess over that.

And the union was on my back to try and tell 'em . . . to try and tell the company they was in violation. And the company wasn't in violation because the breakthrough was turned, and it was a matter of going . . . when you're going in this way, it was a matter of taking . . . what the custom was, to take cut for cut. Anytime you cut a cut out of the breakthrough, you take one out of the straightplace. And the air wouldn't be any worse up here than what it would be back here 'cause you was turning off to the side. And he refused to cut the straightplace.

And then they said that they were so far ahead of the air and so forth. Oh, they had an awful . . . . They struck for seven weeks over it.

PURCELL: And finally the union . . . or the International, the president, you know, it got to their attention. And there was quite a bit of hassling over it. And I wouldn't . . . I didn't take the union's side that time because I told them . . . . They said to me, they said, "Just all you gotta do is tell the union . . . is tell the company they're in violation." I said, "I would do that in a minute if I . . . but I can't prove it. They're not in violation."

WBP: Do you remember what year this was?

PURCELL: That was in . . . uhmmm . . . that was before I left the Bureau of Mines. I was under Governor George N. Craig. It was back in . . .

WBP: This was back from . . . let's see . . . between 1953 and '61, right?

PURCELL: It was between 1953 and . . .

WBP: 'Fifty-six?

PURCELL: . . . 'Seven.

WBP: 'Fifty-seven, right?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And do you know which mine it was?

PURCELL: Hmmm?

WBP: Which mine was it?

PURCELL: It was the Green Valley Mine.

WBP: Green Valley, right. O.K.

PURCELL: And I know the man that they fired. He came in to talk to me. And I liked that man, too! And they . . . they said he was a good man and he was! He was a good fellow. Was a good machine man. We finally got 'em to take the man back.

I know that . . . I . . . my boss came over; and I told him, "Well, let's go out and talk to the superintendent." He was the general manager really. The superintendent was . . . it was under

PURCELL: him yet. So, we went out to talk to him and see if he wouldn't give the man his job back and get the mine back to work. And he bristled up right away. I said, "Now, listen now, Goss." I said, "We're not here trying to tell you what to do. But," I said, "you admit, you know that man is a good man, and you'd miss him if you . . . if you . . . if he . . . if you'd made this firing stick." Well, he admitted that. And I said, "Now, why can't you just give him his job back and get the mine back to work and everything'll be all right."

Well, he wouldn't do anything until he'd talk to his superintendent. I said, "Well, sure. We'd think that's right to talk to him." So, he talked to the superintendent, so they decided to give the man his job back. So, they gave him his job back and the mine went back to work and (laughs) . . .

WBP: And that's what the strike was all about in the first place!

PURCELL: Yes! They . . . they said he fired the man.

WBP: He quit, huh?

PURCELL: But the man really quit (commences to laugh) his job. He just walked off!

It was a sticky thing. I hated to see it because . . . for both sides.

WBP: Did that happen . . . it's interesting how that could happen though. It's almost like it's a hair trigger.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: If one man doesn't like something or gets miffed . . .

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: . . . then he could . . . he could throw the whole mine off.

PURCELL: Yeah, that's right. (chuckles)

WBP: What did you . . . what was your feeling about that?

PURCELL: Well, he . . . you just can't control that. I know I worked in the mine one time in Bickett's north of Shirkieville. I worked there. And we went out there six days one week -- Monday through Saturday. Got off the miners' train and the foreigners that lived out there was to be standing there with their decks from their lunch buckets which separated the food from the drinking water under their elbow . . . under their arm you know, and somebody would yell "Home go!" They'd throw their water out and they'd take off for "Easy Town" Walton.

WBP: They wanted to go drink?

PURCELL: They'd . . . that . . . they'd had some sort of a foreigners' celebration of some kind and they weren't over it yet. They wanted just (laughs) the whole mine to stay off!

WBP: I see. They didn't want . . . if they weren't going to work, they didn't want anybody else to.

PURCELL: That's right! They didn't want anybody else to work!

So, this day we was going back . . . and we would turn around and we would walk back to Terre Haute. We'd count ties all the way back to Terre Haute. And I don't know how far that is out there. That's a heck of a long ways to walk.

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: And there was five of us walking down the track. There was three. I was walking with George Clark and another fella, and there was two other fellas walking about a hundred yards ahead of us. And we got south of Libertyville -- and I never will forget it -- and I just thought to myself, "Well, what the devil we bein' going home for?" And I said to . . . I stopped in the middle of the track, and they took a couple steps ahead of me and turned around. I said, "Say. I want to ask you guys (commences to laugh) a question." I said, "What've we been going home for these last six days?" I was tired of that, turning around and walking back. Why that was terrible! They didn't know. So, we hollered at the fellas in front of us. And they

PURCELL: waited for us and we caught up with them, and we asked them the same question. They didn't know.

I said, "Well, I'll tell you." I said, "We'll find out Monday morning or we'll go to work." Well, they made it up we'd do that.

So, what we did, we commandeered the steps. There was five of us, and we stretched out the five steps where they got off the train the most. And we stayed right on . . . the miners stayed right there [until] that mine [train] stopped (slaps his hand down on the table) dead still. And we got off the mine [train] and we dropped our buckets down on the side and went right straight to the wash house. Well, these guys [were] still there. And they was "home goin'" - hollering "home going." [They] had their water ready to throw out. We just never paid no attention, just walked right straight to the wash house. And after we got in the wash house, we started letting the chains down to change clothes. And they sent their . . . some of their guys over there, you know, and they said, "They're changing clothes, changing clothes . . . think they're going down, think they're going down."

Well, to make a long story short, we wound up by going down that day [and] 'bout half the men from the miners' train followed us. They was just as . . . the biggest majority of them that rode the train was just as disgusted as we were with the situation. We went down and worked, and then the second day they was about all back to work. And then by the third day, they was all back at work.

And I don't know from that day to this what we went home for.

WBP: (laughs heartily)

PURCELL: That was any trouble!

WBP: Tell me something. You said . . . you used the term "Easy Town." Is that . . . is that a specific location?

PURCELL: Yeah. That's . . . that's a few houses and there was, oh, a tavern or two and a grocery store and all. It's just north of Shirkieville, just on the inside of the county line.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: When you go north on the road to Shirkieville, you make a little jog. And where you make that little jog is the County Line Road. And then north of that is "Easy Town."

WBP: O.K. And was there a tavern there?

PURCELL: Yeah. There's a tavern and a grocery store. And several . . . several of the fellows lived there at that little place. 'Bout all of the mines back in those days, there was several houses right around the mine, you know, where different ones lives.

WBP: Tell me about "threw the water out." I've heard that a lot and the miner had water?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah, they had to carry the water to drink, you know, in the bottom of their bucket.

WBP: Each miner had a bucket with water to drink in it?

PURCELL: You've seen the miner's lunch pail, haven't you?

WBP: I think so, but go ahead. Tell me.

PURCELL: Well, there's a deck that sets inside of a bucket. And you fill that bucket with as much water as you can carry in it. And then later on they put a little deck in the top of a bucket for your pie and stuff you know. You could put it in that.

But they'd pull this deck out and have the bucket in their hand ready to throw the water out.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: They carried the water in the mine. They had to to have any mine . . . water to drink, you know.

WBP: I see. That was your drinking water then?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: I mean those buckets . . . those miners' lunch pails, were they round or were they square?

PURCELL: It was round. Most of them was round. There was some of them that was square and some of them was oblong, but not very many of them.

WBP: Were they insulated or is it . . .

PURCELL: No. No, they was just aluminum buckets.

WBP: The water would just get warm during the day?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: But when you threw the water out, that meant that you weren't going in the mine?

PURCELL: Yeah, they weren't going in the mine.

WBP: O.K.

You talked about "pulling the chain down."  
Did your mine . . . when you were working up there, did you have a wash house with your clothes?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah! You hoisted your clothes up on a chain and they hung up above.

WBP: Your clothes that you went back and forth to the mine in?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Well, why did they hoist it up on a chain?

PURCELL: Well, they would dry up. They could dry up there and they would be in the way if they was down there . . . down where your head would hit them, you know.

WBP: I see. Was it a chain that everybody could fasten their clothes to?

PURCELL: Um hm.

WBP: And then they hoisted them all up at once?

PURCELL: Yeah. It was. They was . . . they usually had a thing on it like a grab hook. There would be four hooks on, and then there was a little basket that hung above that you'd keep your soap and things like that in. And you'd hang your mine clothes . . . at night you'd take your clothes you wore home, you'd take them off and put 'em on; and you'd hang your mine clothes on there. And you'd hoist 'em up 'cause they'd be sweaty and all, and they would dry out up there.

WBP: I see. O.K. That's interesting.

Which . . . how thick were the veins of coal that you mined?

PURCELL: Well, most of the mines that I worked, they would run from four foot to five feet. Not very much coal that I worked in and I worked in the #5 seam out in . . . north of Terre Haute. And that's about what the #5 seam run out there. And then the #4 seam would be a little higher. And when you get down south here, why it was some seven foot coal down there.

WBP: You mean there was a seam seven feet thick?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: That would be very . . . that would be unusually large, right?

PURCELL: Yes. There wasn't very much coal in Indiana that was that high.

WBP: The average height in Indiana would be about what?

PURCELL: Oh, I think they considered the average height of the mines out around Terre Haute here was four foot six inches to four foot eight.

WBP: O.K. And what about the veins? Which was the . . . which veins did you mine most frequently?

PURCELL: Well, the #5, they mined . . . most of my time was put in in the #5 seam. But I worked in #4 seam. Now, Jackson . . . or Saxon mine out on North 13th Street was in the #4 seam.

WBP: O.K. What does that mean? What's the difference?

PURCELL: Well, there's a difference in the type of coal and the height of coal and things like that you know.

WBP: What about the BTU value?

PURCELL: Well, that was another thing. Now, the #5 seam usually was awful high in sulphur, and it was awful . . . it was hot coal. That's the reason they used that for steam on the railroad.

WBP: It was high BTU coal then.

PURCELL: Hmm?

WBP: No. 5 seam would be high BTU?

PURCELL: Yeah. And it was because there was so much sulphur in it. The sulphur in the coal. They'd burn that, you see, too.

WBP: I see. Would #4 coal be a lower . . . low sulphur?

PURCELL: It was lower sulphur and it was better burning coal. It was . . . it made better house coal.

WBP: Was #4 coal the best coal?

PURCELL: Yes. It was a better coal as far as clean and so forth was concerned.

WBP: What were the main uses for Indiana coal?

PURCELL: Well, most of it -- back when I mined -- was used for . . . was railroads. And there was . . . a lot of it was taken to Chicago and was used for house coal, too, but . . .

WBP: No. 4 coal was . . . was that primarily house coal or . . .

PURCELL: Well, it all depends. Now, the miners that worked in the #5 seam, why they'd usually burn #5 coal 'cause they got a little better price on their coal. They'd get a car in and you'd order coal from a certain dealer to handle that car and you got your coal a little cheaper.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: And usually the man . . . the miners would burn the coal from the mine that they was working at.

WBP: Um hmm.

PURCELL: For that reason, see. They'd get it cheaper.

WBP: You mentioned the Blackhawk mine. Did you work in the Blackhawk mine?

PURCELL: Yes. I worked down there, oh, for a little over a year, I think it was.

WBP: What year was that? Do you remember that?

PURCELL: Huh?

WBP: You didn't mention that earlier.

PURCELL: Well, that was . . . that was one time when they . . . when the Jackson Hill mine wasn't working so good, and I got a job down there to try to keep a'working, you know.

Jackson Hill mine never worked in the summer-time because . . . because they just . . . they depended on the open market, mostly, for a lot of their coal. That is when I first started out there. Then they got to producing coal for the railroads. And then they could . . . they worked a little better then when they did that.

WBP: Do you remember accidents, mine accidents?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. Yeah. I've had several mine accidents.

WBP: You yourself have?

PURCELL: Um hm.

WBP: Do you want to take a break and get some coffee or have some water or something?

PURCELL: Well, we could.

BREAK IN RECORDING

WBP: I think you do and I would like to hear as many of them as you could tell me.

PURCELL: Mine fires and I've helped fight mine fires several times. Now, that's another experience.

WBP: Which . . . which ones affected you? Which mine . . . were you injured in mines? In mine accidents? How were you injured? Where?

PURCELL: Well, I had this terrible burn and I was injured a couple of times on haulage. I put some time in as a motorman, too, and trip rider. And I was hurt a time or two then. And . . .

[Purcell's brother enters the conversation briefly.]

PURCELL: I've got a 50-year pin, too, but it ain't from being in the coal mines 50 years. I got my 50 years in the Masonic order.

WBP: Oh, do you? Are you a 33rd degree Mason? Thirty-second degree?

PURCELL: Thirty-second, yeah.

WBP: Thirty-second.

PURCELL: I went to Scottich rite. I didn't go through the York rite.

WBP: That's a fine museum they have downtown, isn't it?

PURCELL: Um hm.

WBP: You know Earl Prater then?

PURCELL: Yeah, oh, yeah.

I've got some things I give Earl for that museum.

WBP: You did?

PURCELL: Yeah. And I asked him one day if he could use my old tux. He said, "We take anything!" (laughs)

WBP: (laughs heartily)

PURCELL: So, I think I'm going to get my tux . . . .  
You see, that was our . . . our regalia. We wore  
[a] tux and a stiff hat. The master wore a stiff  
hat when I was going through the chairs. I'm past  
master of . . . .

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: And I told Earl, I said, "Well, I've got my  
old tux yet." He said, "You're kidding." I said,  
"Yes, it is. It's just as good as the day (laughs)  
. . . the day I got it." You know it ain't worn or  
nothing.

WBP: You don't wear them . . . they never get worn  
out, do they?

PURCELL: No. No. Especially when you don't wear them  
only just going to lodge. That's the only time I  
wore the tux. Oh, I've put it on and clowning around  
in it a time or two.

WBP: Tell me about the time the powder blew up in  
your hands.

PURCELL: Oh. There was a motor . . . he was going  
inside to deliver props. And I had a motor setting  
right here ready to come out when he went in. And  
I was going to . . . [when he] come out, I was going  
to follow him inside. And I got to thinking, "Well,  
he had powder that he was going to stop and unload"  
. . . . Well, my brother was one of the men that  
he was going to give the powder to. And they was  
driving an entry along the main entry for an air  
course. And these fellows just worked on these  
idle days because they couldn't take care of them  
on a hoist day because they was right off the main  
line and they couldn't very handy take care of them.  
And they just worked . . . every day that the mine  
hoisted, they'd work an idle day to drive this  
entry.

And they was . . . this powder was in a car  
right there in front of the . . . in front of where  
I had my motor setting. So, I knew that when the  
motorman got in there he'd have to stop and worm  
his way back between the rib and everything to get  
back to that car to throw this powder out.

PURCELL: So, I told him, I said, "Now, just a minute, buddy." I said, "I'll take that powder and put it on the motor and take it in, and I'll throw that off to them. Then you can go right on." And I knew he'd get out of my way. I wanted him out of my way, too, because if he stopped, it'd take him quite a while to walk back there and get rid of that powder.

So, I went to . . . and I couldn't get around the motor 'cause it was standing in a doorway. There wasn't no room to get around it. So, I just was stackin' it on the front end of the motor. And when he'd get out, then I could pull the motor out. Then I was going to put it around on a platform on the other end of the motor. And I'd already put one keg down in the driver's seat. And there was a box . . . two boxes -- no, two kegs . . . . Anyhow there was 100 pounds of powder there. And I went to set another . . . the second keg down in on top of that one, and there was a little single-pull light switch above that keg. And this second keg hit that little single-pull light switch and shorted it. And it burnt a hole in the keg and then as it went up, it was practically in my hands.

WBP: My goodness!

PURCELL: And I just . . . the only thing I could do was fall back. Fortunately, the hitchings was stretched because it was uphill where they was pulling them cars up out of the empty lead and the hitchings was stretched, and I just fell back between those cars. And so then I called on my buddy to come to me and he . . . he was up at the motor. And he called back and said, "Well, I can't get to you, buddy, for the smoke." And then there was another fellow inside of the motor room, in back of the motor. And there was another outlet there, and when that powder burned up, why he went out that hole and went out on top. It scared him. Incidentally, that fellow's still living. He's over a 100 years old.

WBP: Is that right?

PURCELL: Um hm. Alec Lawson's his name. He lives out on Fourth Avenue.

PURCELL: And so I thought to myself, "Well, if he can't get to me, I've got to try to get to him because I can't stay here either in this smoke." So, I got up and went to feeling my way along. I knew where . . . I knew that the loaded track [there] wasn't any cars on it. So, I got up and started out, and I got back there to that break-through and went through onto the loaded track and I put my foot on the rail. The lights . . . there was no lights or anything on it, see. Didn't have any power on the trolley wire or anything. This was a battery motor. And so I was feeling my way with my foot. I knew when I come to the diamond and all and about the time I got out there to the diamond . . . why this electrician that went up, he caught the . . . the main electrician was just ready to come down. And he come down and he intercepted me there on the bottom. And then they took me out on top.

But I was . . . they didn't give me . . . the doctor didn't give me four days to live. He . . . I told him . . . when we got to the hospital, there was three or four things I told him. I said, "Now, Doc, I want you to know," I said, "I did not breathe any of this fire." I knew that. There was a little bit of burn just inside my nose. It just burned up there, but I didn't . . . it wasn't because I inhaled. I said, "I didn't breathe any fire." And I said, "And my eyes are not affected." I could see. And I said, "And I want a special nurse and a private room." Well, he met all my demands. Got me a nurse. And when he went to get the nurse, why he told her, he said, "Got a bad burn case down there in 105" in the Union Hospital. He said, "And he can't possibly live over three or four days, but," he said, "go in and do the best you can for him."

So, at the end of, oh, about a week or two weeks -- I don't know which it was now -- he come in. And he said, "Well, Charlie, you're going to be all right now." I looked . . . and I told him, I said, "Oh, yeah, I knew that." And . . . oh, yeah, and I told him when I told him I wanted them things, I said, "And I'm not going to die." You see, I just wouldn't hear tell of dying; and I come out of it.

WBP: Tell me. How bad were the burns?

PURCELL: Oh, my hands was burned . . . see there?  
[shows his scars and missing little finger]

WBP: Um hm.

PURCELL: Now, most people think that that's because the nurse didn't properly take care of me. But I . . . when I first started . . . before them hands was out of the bandage, he told me to work my fingers. I could just barely work them like this (demonstrates with finger movements). Now, you watch this hand when I pull. See where the stretch comes from? This scar right there (points) was right here. And I just stretched that scar tissue right down over them and that's the reason they're like that.

WBP: I see.

Is that when you lost your little finger, too?

PURCELL: Yeah. I lost that little finger in the deal. It drew right over in the palm of my hand like that.

WBP: Your little finger did?

PURCELL: Yeah. And they took and was going to graft some skin there. And when they got in it and cut this here scar tissue out there, why they seen that the scar tissue had picked up the tendon and drew the tendon right over. And they knew it would grow back. They straightened the finger for a little while, but it just . . . it automatically went right back over there. [The] scar tissue just pulled right back in there where it was.

So, then he decided to amputate it. And I just wanted him to take it off at this knuckle joint. And he said, "No," he said, "that little stub of a finger wouldn't do you too much good." And he said, "We can get more . . . it would be better for you to have it off back here." And that little spot right there (pointing), that's some of the flesh, that's where they've taken that flesh off of my stomach.

WBP: Is that right?

PURCELL: I used to tell little kids . . . . You know kids, they see you got a finger off and they looked at it and they stroke it and they wonder about it. And I'd say, "Yeah, I cut that finger off." And I told 'em how it happened and all. I said, "And where they got this skin, they cut this skin off my belly." I said, "And every time I have the bellyache that hurts."

WBP: (laughs heartily)

PURCELL: And they'd look at me.

WBP: I bet it does, yeah, yeah.

Did you . . . was your face burned?

PURCELL: Oh, my, yes! I didn't have no profile at all.

WBP: Really?

PURCELL: My face just was flat. I didn't know what to do. I was sitting up there . . . now, I didn't . . . . When they first brought me out of the mine, I thought it was curtains. I decided I was done for. And I told the bookkeeper to call home and have my wife to go to school and get the kids out of school and meet me at the hospital.

WBP: You were 33 years old, right?

PURCELL: Yeah. And I said . . . because I wanted to see my family before I left this world. The bookkeeper tried to talk me out of it. "Oh," he said, "Charlie, you're all right. You're going to be all right." And I said, "Now, Carl, I know how bad I'm burned." I said, "Now, I appreciate what you're trying to do, but I'm done for and I know that." And I talked to him just like I'm talking to you.

So, when we got to the hospital, I was sitting there on the table, just sitting straight up. I had my hands up like this (demonstrates) 'cause they had them all bandaged and I couldn't hand 'em nothing. They just throbbed, you know, when I'd hang 'em down. I was sitting there like a big owl, straight up on that steel table.

PURCELL: First, it was the nurse come open the door. And she stepped inside the door, and she . . . they was all looking like this, you know. And then another one and another one. They got five or six of them. And so I told them . . . see, this wasn't my first experience in the hospital; I'd been to the hospital before. I knew what some of the rules and regulations of the hospital were. The nurse is not supposed to show any . . . any feeling for a patient, you know. It's supposed to be strictly professional. And, oh, they just was lookin' so bad, and I could see their faces. And I said, "What's the matter?" I said . . . I could see just a little bit out of the corner of this one eye, just a little bit out of a bandage. I said, "What's the matter with you girls? Can't any of you smile?"

WBP: Ha, ha!

PURCELL: They looked at one another, just as much as to say, "Well, he can't see." So, pretty soon there was a little red-headed girl about the middle of the way of them, and she looked and she had a little curl and a smile came out of her, one side of her mouth. I said, "There!" I said, "That little red-headed girl can smile." I said, "Why don't the rest of you smile like she does?"

And she said, "You know you're not supposed to act that way."

WBP: Ha, ha!

PURCELL: And, boy, they went out of there like that. (claps his hands together quickly)

WBP: I bet they did, yes.

Well, was there . . . were these third-degree burns, second-degree?

PURCELL: These were third-degree burns.

WBP: On your hands?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: Do you have feeling in your hands?

PURCELL: Oh, yes! But you can take a pin and it won't . . . that scar tissue, there's no feeling in it.

WBP: Not on the top of your hand here?

PURCELL: No. I can feel that tapping, 'cause it goes through.

WBP: Yeah. But you have feeling in your fingertips?

PURCELL: No. Oh, feeling in fingertips, yeah! I can feel . . . I have feeling in them and they'll . . . you stick them and they hurt. You see my . . . it was the backs of my hands that got burned.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: But when she was . . . one day when she was taking this flesh off . . . I think it was . . . I'm pretty sure it was this finger here in particular. She was . . . had the tweezers and she was pulling that. And she said, "Well, I believe, Charlie, that whole thing's going to come off." And she just pulled on it and the whole thing just slipped off, and she stood it up on a tray there -- this whole skin.

WBP: My goodness!

PURCELL: Come right off that finger.

WBP: Hmm. So it's all scar tissue on your second to the last finger here.

PURCELL: Yeah. And then this scar tissue all . . . I got some good, healthy scar tissue though.

WBP: You bet!

PURCELL: And I can use my hands but I don't have the grip.

WBP: How much powder went off?

PURCELL: Twenty-five pounds.

WBP: Black powder? Was anybody else hurt?

PURCELL: No. The others wasn't close enough to be burned. You see, everybody seems to think that black powder that way would explode. And they'd say, "Well, it looks like it'd blown your head off." I say, "Well, it don't work that way."

And the best illustration I can give 'em for it, well, you take these little, tiny firecrackers. And you light the fuse. If you hold it in your hand and it exploded in your hand, you're liable to get burnt. And it makes an awful report if you throw it down. And it blows that thing to smithereens. But you know when you was a kid, once in a while you'd have a fizzer. And you'd break the shell open and light it, and it'd just go "whizzlrr."

WBP: That's right.

PURCELL: Well, that's the way that does.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: You see, it wasn't confined. Powder to explode has to be confined.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: What black powder does, if you put it in a hole and you tamp the hole with tamping and when your spark reaches the powder, the powder begins to burn. And that's the reason if a shot is overloaded, it'll blow it all out and a lot of the power is expended into the air.

But the powder begins to burn and it creates a gas. And the gas forms in there, and when it gets enough gas formed, it creates enough pressure then to move the load that's behind.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: And if it can't, if you haven't got enough powder in it, it'll make a crack and come back out. It makes a crack up and down.

WBP: I see.

Let's talk about your work as a director of the Bureau of Mines. What was your job there?

PURCELL: Well, my job was to supervise the inspectors. I had six inspectors when I first went in there in '53. And then they cut it down as the mines went down. There was 70 some mines and they were all shaft mines.

WBP: This is when?

PURCELL: That was in '53, when I took over the first time. I had six inspectors and they would inspect the mines. I would . . . I run the office and took care of the office work and then, occasionally, I'd go out to the mines. If they had a knotty problem of some kind, I'd go out to the mine for that reason and all.

WBP: What would the inspectors look for?

PURCELL: Huh?

WBP: What were they . . . what would the inspectors . . . were they inspecting the mines for safety violations?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. They . . . mostly to see that they didn't violate the law.

WBP: All right. So, it was for the protection of the workers.

PURCELL: It was for the protection of the workers. That's what the inspection department was for.

WBP: So, it was . . . again, a branch of the Department of Labor?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: The mining division. My department was known as the Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mining.

WBP: Um hm.

PURCELL: And it was . . . come under the labor division. That's why the Labor Secretary was my immediate boss.

WBP: O.K. And when there was a strike, what was your job?

PURCELL: Well, if there was a strike, we just . . . we didn't go around the mines. There was no men there nor . . .

WBP: It wasn't your job to help arbitrate strikes?

PURCELL: No. No. Oh, we did that one time. Up there we tried to . . . and we did get the job done eventually but they had that . . . but we wouldn't . . . that wasn't our job.

BREAK IN THE RECORDING

WBP: So . . . you got this job, in part because you were a good Republican. Were there many miners who were Republicans?

PURCELL: There wasn't as many as there were from other parties, you know. But there were some.

WBP: Most of the . . . most of the miners were what? What party?

PURCELL: Were Democrats.

WBP: All right.

And you said earlier that your father was a supporter of Eugene V. Debs?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Did he know Debs?

PURCELL: Oh, yes! Oh, yes, he knew him. And I've seen him. He lived here in Terre Haute, you know.

WBP: Yes. You mean . . . and you said earlier also that you'd given a speech in support of Debs as a young man.

PURCELL: Well, I was just a boy. I was a kid in the tree. I'd get up in the tree . . . (breaks into laughter)

WBP: I see. Before you were old enough to vote even?

PURCELL: Yeah, oh, yeah, I wasn't old enough to vote.

WBP: And that you decided to become a Republican . . .

PURCELL: Well, that was when . . . when I had my first vote, after I moved to Terre Haute. And like I said when it come to my first vote, why . . .

WBP: And what year was that? Do you remember?

PURCELL: That was '22. That was my first vote. You see they didn't have no election in '21; and you couldn't vote until you was 21 anyhow, back in them days. I think they've . . . it's a different law now.

WBP: So, you registered as a Republican basically because you liked the candidates in '22?

PURCELL: Yes.

WBP: Do you remember which candidates they were?

PURCELL: Ooooh, John Foncannon . . . it was when John Foncannon was running for sheriff. I can't remember some of those other guys' names. Will Church, I think, run for prosecutor. And . . .

WBP: You don't know who was the mayoral candidate then? I'm not sure.

PURCELL: I'm trying to think who was running for mayor. I don't think that they elected a mayor that year. That was the off election.

WBP: Yeah, may be.

PURCELL: I think they elected a mayor in '24.

WBP: But anyway, you . . .

PURCELL: Wood Posey . . . no, let's see. He wouldn't be . . . he was mayor one time. He was Democrat.

WBP: His name was Wood Posey?

PURCELL: Wood Posey.

WBP: W-o-o-d?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: P-o-s-e-y?

PURCELL: Um hm. Because his wife belonged to our church, Methodist Temple. It was First Church then, at that time.

WBP: Over the years the Republicans were not very strong in Vigo County, were they?

PURCELL: No. They were . . . they were stronger that year. That was when the Ku Klux Klan was just starting in, and they elected almost a complete slate that first term. That was in '22.

WBP: Did you know of any Klansmen?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I knew a lot of them.

WBP: What was your feeling toward them, about the Klan?

PURCELL: Well, when the Klan first started out, it was secretive as could be. And I belonged to the Klan.

WBP: Did you?

PURCELL: And about half the preachers belonged to it.

WBP: Is that right?

PURCELL: When it was first started. And there wasn't . . . they never told us before we joined or anything . . . they didn't tell us that they was anti-Negro or anti- . . . . We wasn't anti- anything. And then when they . . . oh, horse thieves started, why these guys . . . why they'd go out and raid these stills and drink the booze themselves. Then's when I fell out of the Klan. I said, "That ain't for me!"

WBP: You mean there was horse stealing that went on . . .

PURCELL: Well, no. They called it "horse thieves" -- the association. They would raid these . . . the stills, you know, and then they'd drink the booze.

WBP: I see. They'd go out to close down stills.

PURCELL: Yeah. They corrupted it. They were as corrupt as they could be.

WBP: They would speak out against illegal liquor . . .

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: . . . bootlegging and then they'd go out and drink the . . .

PURCELL: They was against these . . . but yet they'd raid these places and then drink the booze.

WBP: I see.

How did you happen to join the Klan?

PURCELL: Well, there were some members . . . some fellows, friends of mine. And they had . . . their propaganda was wrote out, and there was nothing there that said you had to hate a Negro or you hated a Catholic or anything like that.

WBP: What did they say?

PURCELL: Well, they just said they was pro-American. And I couldn't see anything wrong with it until they got . . . they got corrupt. There was no question that they got corrupted.

WBP: I see. Did that have something to do with your decision to vote Republican, perhaps?

PURCELL: Huh?

WBP: Did that have something to do with your decision to vote Republican?

PURCELL: Well, that first election it did because I knew most of those fellows that was running on the Republican ticket.

WBP: They . . . were they Klansmen, too?

PURCELL: Most of them were. Some of them weren't. And there were a lot on the Democrat ticket that was Klansmen, too.

WBP: Were there?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: So, over the years though, you continued to be active in the Republican party. You were precinct committeeman.

PURCELL: Yeah. I guess after I got a taste of that first election, then one day the precinct committeeman was moving out of the precinct; and he handed the books over to another fellow. And that fellow brought the books over to my house and told me, he said, "Les says you're the precinct committeeman."

WBP: (chuckles)

PURCELL: I knew that it wasn't done thataway. The county chairman had to have a say in it so I talked to the county chairman. And he told me, he said . . . wanted to know if I'd go ahead and take it. And I said, "Yeah, I'll take it." So, I held on to it for 22 years.

WBP: No kidding? Were you able to deliver a certain number of Republican votes up in North Terre Haute?

PURCELL: No. No. My precinct was 3 and 4 to 1, Democrats. But . . .

WBP: It was an uphill struggle.

PURCELL: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. I don't think we ever won an election up there. We made some gains a time or two when . . . but that was because the Democrats was having trouble within their own party, you know. And they would . . . most of them would . . . the Democrats would stay home. Well, then . . . I worked like the devil to get all of my Republicans out. And if I got all of my Republicans to come out and vote and half the Democrats stay home and the other half just maybe come vote for one person or something -- they was so disgusted you know -- why we made some gains in that way, see.

WBP: Yes.

What about . . . do you remember any violence perpetrated by the Klan during this period of the 1920s?

PURCELL: No. No. Not while I was a member of them there never was any violence. They didn't . . . they didn't believe in violence. It was told to us before we went in.

WBP: Do you remember much of a problem of people being against Catholics or being against blacks or Jews in Vigo County? Was there much of that?

PURCELL: Now, there's . . . you know there's some people that are prejudiced. And they are prejudiced because the people was Catholic or because they was black. Well, I never was prejudiced against anyone.

END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2-SIDE 1

PURCELL: . . . church.

WBP: You rode to work with someone who was a . . .

PURCELL: Huh?

WBP: Go ahead. Tell me.

PURCELL: I said I worked with a fellow [who] belonged to the Maple Avenue Christian Church. And he used to argue that if you wasn't baptized -- put under the water -- why you was going straight to hell.

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: And he had tracts and everything to prove it. He had one tract, I remember [it said]: "How would you like to be buried?" [It] showed a picture of a man just under the ground. They [were] sprinkling a little dirt on him. [Do you want to be buried] "this way, or this way." It showed a man six feet under. (laughs) Oh, we'd argue one another.

PURCELL: And so one day I told him, I said, "Well, Charley," I said, "we don't see eye-to-eye on this, but," I said, "I want to tell you, if it'll help you any . . ."

[Brief interruption]

PURCELL: I told him, I said, "If it'll mean anything to you, I'll tell you." I said, "I been immersed." And I said, "Furthermore, I was immersed in that little tub of yours under the pulpit there." (breaks out in laughter)

WBP: (joins the laughter)

PURCELL: Maple Avenue Christian church. He didn't know that. And I said, "So, I want you to know that." I said, "But I don't think that that was necessary for me to go to heaven."

WBP: (laughs heartily)

PURCELL: "It's how I live is what counts."

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: I said, "These here others are symbols."

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: Oh, he just . . . he just preached it, you know.

WBP: Sure.

I'm kind of jumping around, but I'm kind of trying to stay with what we're talking about at the moment. What about social gathering places? Where did the miners gather in Terre Haute? Particularly . . .

PURCELL: Well, usually the taverns was usually the place where they would congregate or socialize.

WBP: O.K. And were there any . . . were there . . . can you name a few taverns where they would gather?

PURCELL: Oh, around Twelve Points they was several there. There was Sipes Hall. It set right there on the corner of 13th and Maple Avenue, on the northeast corner.

WBP: All right.

PURCELL: Now, that was one place where they gathered. Then there was another one around on Lafayette. There was two or three on Lafayette there. There were four or five saloons right there.

And then there was one out east on Maple Avenue, right out there close to where the miners' trains started there at the railroad, first railroad track.

WBP: O.K. That's called the . . . let's see. There's still a tavern there today, I think, isn't there?

PURCELL: I think there is. I'm not sure of it. I think there's one out that way someplace.

Oh, we'd go . . . we used to attend the vaudevilles a lot in Terre Haute when vaudeville was going. And that was always a pastime.

WBP: Where did you go to see vaudeville?

PURCELL: Well, the old Hippodrome. They used to have vaudeville there. And then . . . at one time I think they had it at . . . no, they never . . . I don't remember of ever having it at the Indiana theater. It was strictly a movie, when they put that in. But I understand they're going to start showing vaudeville shows up there again. Did you hear that?

WBP: Well, they had a vaudeville show there just a couple weeks ago. The Vigo County Historical Society put on a vaudeville show.

PURCELL: Well, they . . . I heard that they was . . . it was coming back.

WBP: Well, that's great!

PURCELL: Vaudeville was coming back.

WBP: Are you glad to hear that?

PURCELL: Yes. I used to like to go to those song-and-dance men, you know, and the jokesters and those. They used to put on some pretty good shows.

WBP: Would you go regularly? Would you go every . . .

PURCELL: I used to go pretty regularly, yeah.

WBP: What else would you do in Terre Haute for fun?

PURCELL: Oh, we . . . I never . . . I went as a . . .  
I was a churchgoers from, oh, about 16 on.

WBP: What church?

PURCELL: The Methodist Church.

WBP: Which one?

PURCELL: Well, there's a little . . . Maple Avenue . . . or Lafayette Avenue, it was called. It ain't on Lafayette Avenue. It's just off Lafayette Avenue on the street that I lived on -- 16th Street. It's . . . there's still a church there; the Pilgrim Holiness bought it. When the Methodists ceased to operate in that church, they sold it to the Pilgrim Holiness.

Now, there's where I went to church as a boy. And then when my wife and I was married, she had her membership in Maple Avenue. Well, of course, my membership was there at Lafayette Avenue. And we always had our young people's meetings and all. That's where we went for our fun.

WBP: Where did other miners go for fun?

PURCELL: Oh, I don't . . . I don't really know. They'd go out to the parks and things. And we'd go to the park occasionally, but . . . and all but . . . they just . . . there wasn't as much back in those days as there was now.

WBP: Much what?

PURCELL: Much . . . as many places to go and to have fun.

WBP: I suppose there was certain . . .

PURCELL: You just got . . . a few would get together  
in a home or . . .

WBP: Or at the church . . . church or neighborhood  
. . .

PURCELL: Yeah. Church groups and things like that,  
just small groups.

WBP: Do you . . . is it your impression that the  
miners patronized the red light district, the  
west end very much?

PURCELL: Did the miners . . .

WBP: Would the miners use . . . go to the west end?

PURCELL: Oh, yes. Yeah, you could hear them talking  
about going down "the line," they called it.

WBP: Down the line?

PURCELL: Line, they called it down the line. (pause)

I had a little experience. I was going down  
3rd Street one day, walking down to the courthouse,  
I think. And right on 3rd Street. And that was  
the first experience I'd had, and this gal came to  
the window and tapped on the window. And I looked  
up and she was standing there. She had a red dress  
on, I remember that, and she was motioning me in.  
I just kept on going; I never stopped. I never . . .  
I never did visit at one of those places.

WBP: The Terre Haute red light district was fairly  
well-known around the nation.

PURCELL: Yes. It was . . .

WBP: Why do you think it was so well-known?

PURCELL: Well, they was so open with it. They was just  
those places. They knowed what they was there for  
and everybody knew it.

WBP: Accepted it.

PURCELL: Yeah, they just accepted it . . . 'till it finally got cracking down on 'em. And they finally got rid of the places, but it didn't stop it, of course!

WBP: Was it a larger area than most cities had, do you think? A larger number of houses?

PURCELL: I don't know really, whether it was more prevalent in Terre Haute than most other cities or whether they just . . . the city just got the reputation. And once you get a reputation that's a bad one, it's hard to shake it.

And I've always thought Terre Haute was a pretty doggone good place to live myself.

Now, by the same token, Terre Haute's got more churches per capita than any city of its size anywhere.

WBP: That's interesting. That's something that's not widely known.

PURCELL: At one time, there were ten Methodist churches.

WBP: Is that right? Huh.

Let's go back to your job as director of the Bureau of Mines. During what . . . you became director when? In 19 . . .

PURCELL: 'Fifty-three.

WBP: 'Fifty-three. O.K. Now . . .

PURCELL: I served until 1961.

WBP: I have that down here.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: When . . . when you went into the mines, you went in in . . .

PURCELL: 'Fourteen.

WBP: 'Fourteen. All right. Now, by 1953, would you say that mining was . . . there were as many mines in 1953 as there were in 1914?

- PURCELL: No. I don't think so. But when I first started in the Bureau of Mines, they didn't inspect the mine unless it had 10 or more men. And then in the meantime, while I was in there, they got so that we inspected all coal mines. I knew there was one down here by Sullivan that was [a] one-man coal mine.
- WBP: You were inspecting all mines in the Indiana coal fields?
- PURCELL: Yeah. Underground mines.
- WBP: Underground mines.
- PURCELL: Yeah. We didn't . . . we never bothered the strip mines. There was no law on the strip mines, and we don't have any particular law on them now. But they are inspecting them. The labor division and my department . . . the department I had is inspecting them. And that came into being just before I quit the mine . . . quit the inspecting department. But . . . and they was all underground mines. They was either slope or drift. A drift is one where you just go under a bank, straight under a bank. A slope is one you slope down to the seam or shaft. That's the one that's the vertical mine. Now, that . . . them was all considered underground mining. And we inspected.
- WBP: All right. So, in 1953 you had six inspectors when you first began . . . became director?
- PURCELL: Yes.
- WBP: O.K. Now, how did that change then from '53 until the time you . . . until '77?
- PURCELL: Well, it just . . . they knocked off two, I think, one time. And then that left me with four; and then they got down to two, I think it was. And one . . . for a while I didn't have any inspectors. They all quit.
- WBP: That's reflected . . . and why is that? Why did you . . .

PURCELL: Well, the mines was going down and the inspectors got a better job. See, they could make more money in a coal mine then than they could in the inspection department.

WBP: Um hm.

O.K. Talk about coal production in Indiana. During your time as director of Bureau of Mines from '53 to '77 . . . even though you were out a number of years there with what? [During] the Matt Welch administration you were not in and the Roger Brannigan administration, but you . . . during the . . . all the Republican governors from '53 on you were the director of the Bureau of Mines. Isn't that correct?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: So, during that time, what about production? Did it remain the same or did it increase?

PURCELL: No. The production increased because of the automation, you know. See, automation came in while . . . pretty much while I was in the Bureau of Mines.

WBP: All right. So, basically what was happening then is that the shaft mines, drift mines, and slope mines were closing down; strip mining was coming into effect.

PURCELL: And strip mining was taking over. You see what caused that, strip mining, they kept a-going ever deeper. I know there's one place in Kentucky . . . when I was at the Indiana Mining Institute, we had a paper -- he was on the program -- and he told of one mine down in western Kentucky where they were going over 200 feet, stripping over 200 feet.

WBP: My goodness!

PURCELL: But they were getting about four different seams, and they took 'em all as they went down. And you can see . . . now it used to be that they wouldn't think about stripping under 30 or 40 feet -- or over 30 or 40 feet.

WBP: When was the last shaft, slope, or drift mine closed?

PURCELL: Well, they're not all closed yet. There's a drift mine at . . . north of Booneville Indiana. And then there's a shaft mine southeast of Petersburg that's still going. And then there's a couple more mines where -- they're just drift mines -- where the . . . for some reason, I don't know why, they didn't mine that coal. And there's been two or three miners got together and leased it. And they've just went back underground and they're taking coal out there. There's two mines like that that I know of.

WBP: O.K.

PURCELL: And the mine north of Booneville and the one southeast of Petersburg is the only underground mines that I know of in the state right now.

WBP: O.K.

When did the last underground mine in Vigo County close? Do you remember that?

PURCELL: Ummmm. Saxon. Saxon closed at . . .

WBP: Was Saxon the last one?

PURCELL: No. (slight pause) I can't remember which was the last one that closed.

WBP: Was it . . . do you remember whether it . . . which governor it was under?

PURCELL: Dode should know. When Dode comes out, he can tell you just when Saxon went down 'cause he worked at Saxon.

WBP: Um hm. O.K. I can find out when they closed. What I need to know is which one was the last one.

PURCELL: I think this little Mount Pleasant mine out here southeast of town was the last . . .

WBP: O.K.

PURCELL: . . . shaft mine.

WBP: And that was fairly recently.

PURCELL: Yes, that hasn't been too long ago. It's been . . . well, it's been longer than you'd think, too, because I've been out, you know, now several years. And it was while I was in the Bureau of Mines that they went down.

WBP: When was the . . . what would you say would be the heyday of coal from Indiana . . .

PURCELL: But that was the last one . . . I'm pretty sure that Mount Pleasant was the last shaft mine that closed in Vigo County.

When did Saxon go down, Dode?

DODE: Huh?

PURCELL: When did Saxon shut down?

DODE: In March in '54.

PURCELL: March of '54 was the last they worked.

WBP: O.K.

What was the biggest underground mine in Vigo County? In terms of production and employment?

PURCELL: I don't remember but I'd say Green Valley just offhand. They probably had the highest production of any mine in Vigo County that I know of.

WBP: And that was during what period?

PURCELL: I was trying to think when they went down.

WBP: Was that in the '50s, too, or earlier?

PURCELL: No, it would . . . it was later than '52. It would have been sometime in . . . sometime between '53 and '61, I think.

WBP: All right.

Where was that located?

PURCELL: West of West Terre Haute. It's located at . . . well, you get to it by going out U.S. Route 150 and turning up over the hill there at Ferguson Hill, you know?

WBP: Yes.

PURCELL: Go up on that hill there and then straight west of there a ways.

WBP: Between Ferguson Hill and Liggett?

PURCELL: Yeah. Yeah.

WBP: O.K.

And that was an underground mine. Was that a shaft mine?

PURCELL: That was a shaft mine.

WBP: All right.

Do you . . . Which mines produced the majority of coal in Vigo County? Green Hill? Green Valley, rather? Snow Hill?

PURCELL: Snow Hill, yeah, they was a good . . . they would have had pretty good production, too. You see, Snow Hill worked two veins. They worked the #4 vein. Then they took it on down to the #3 vein.

WBP: I see.

PURCELL: And right across the track from that was the Clovelly mine and it worked the #5 seam.

WBP: Where was . . . where were they located?

PURCELL: Well, they . . . you know there's a rock cut that takes off to the right when you get across the bridge.

WBP: Where?

PURCELL: On the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad.

WBP: Up in Sugar Creek township?

PURCELL: No. It wouldn't . . . it'd been . . .

WBP: Fayette?

PURCELL: It'd be in Fayette, I think, in Fayette township.

WBP: All right.

PURCELL: I . . . I've . . . yeah, they was closer  
to . . .

WBP: Well, I can find them. That's O.K. Go ahead.

PURCELL: Yeah. I could take you to it but I can't tell  
you . . . but when you cross the river on the  
Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, just a short  
distance over there, there's a spur goes off to  
the right. And you go through a rock cut, and  
right around . . . through that rock cut set the  
Clovelly mine on one side of the railroad track and  
on the other side set the Talleydale mine. And  
then when the Talleydale mine . . . the Clovelly  
mine was in the #5 seam.

WBP: When you say, "Clow Valley," c-l-o-w?

PURCELL: C-l-o-v- . . .

WBP: Oh, Clove. C-l-o-v-e?

PURCELL: Yeah. . . . v-e-l-l-e-y, valley [he pronounces  
it]: Clovelly.

They was on the east side . . . or, the west  
side of the track and the Snow Hill . . . or the  
Talleydale mine was on the right side of the track.  
They was in the #5 seam, and the . . . this one  
here was in a #4 seam. And they worked that seam  
out. And then they sunk that on down to the #3  
seam. And they worked the #3 seam out through that  
same mine there.

WBP: I see. And this . . . was this the Bledsoe  
Coal Company?

PURCELL: No. No. Bledsoe didn't operate that mine.  
The Talleys . . .

WBP: Talleys.

PURCELL: . . . I think was . . . because it was called Talleydale, you know. Talleydale was owned by Snow Hill Coal Company.

WBP: Formerly, the Coal Bluff Mining Company?

PURCELL: No. No, the Coal Bluff Mining Company was . . .

WBP: Up in Nevins township.

PURCELL: . . . yeah, they was up . . . they was up around Clinton, and they was over in . . . this way, too.

WBP: All right.

What was the low . . . do you remember when coal mining began to just fall off and the mines started closing down? When was that mainly?

PURCELL: Well, that would have been . . . that would have been somewheres in the late '50s. When I took over the mine . . . the Bureau of Mines in '53, there were 72 or -3 mines -- underground mines. And there again, the Indiana Bureau of Mines had only inspected coal mines. We didn't take any other kind of mining. I know one fellow in Ohio said that the mining department over there had jurisdiction over everything that come out of the ground but potatoes.

WBP: Hmp.

PURCELL: And they inspected gravel pits and stone quarries and everything. But this . . . the Bureau of Mines here was strictly coal mines. There was a clay mine over there . . . some clay mines over in there around Brazil. We never did inspect them.

WBP: But by the time you left the Bureau of Mines, how many . . . there were very few -- maybe four or five -- underground mines?

PURCELL: When I left the Bureau of Mines there was about two or three underground mines.

WBP: O.K. And . . . but there was still stripping going on?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah.

WBP:               What was . . . what do you think would be probably the lowest number . . . amount of total tonnage of Indiana coal that was mined? Sixteen million tons?

PURCELL:          Well, you see . . . if you're considering what the strip mines . . . you could . . . I could get that for you from the Bureau of Mines.

WBP:               Yeah, I've got that, too. I thought maybe you knew it off the top of your head.

PURCELL:          No, I don't remember just when the lowest production was but . . .

WBP:               How do you account for the falling off of production of Indiana coal? Why do you . . .

PURCELL:          Well, this environmental thing has caused a lot of it. They're having a time . . . they're still having a time just trying to get . . . to use Indiana coal on account of the sulphur content.

WBP:               O.K.

                  What about . . . what about markets? Were the . . . well, the markets changed, didn't they?

PURCELL:          Yeah, they changed but Indiana coal has got a good BTU record. Now, you take this western coal that's so clean in the environment, they don't have to have scrubbers or anything to burn that they say. But it don't have the BTUs.

WBP:               I see.

PURCELL:          It isn't as good a grade of coal.

WBP:               All right.

                  Do you think . . . coal mining fell off beginning in the 1920s really in Indiana in terms of total production, did it not?

PURCELL:          I don't know in 1920.

WBP:               How was coal mining affected by the Depression?

PURCELL: Well, it was affected by the Depression. It run a lot of little fellows out of business.

WBP: But coal mining . . . didn't the coal mining industry beginning around 1921-22 begin to have hard times?

PURCELL: Yes. They began to witness a little slack off, of course. I'd say that the highest peak of coal mining was around in 1918.

WBP: I think, too.

PURCELL: Because that was during the war.

WBP: Then it levels off and falls during the '30s, and then during World War II it began to come up again.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Then levels off again a little bit.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And then strip mining takes over in the mid-50s.

When did strip mining really start coming in?

PURCELL: Well, strip mining has been . . . there's been strip mining, oh, even before I went in as director of the Bureau of Mines.

WBP: But it began to predominate in the '50s or '60s would you say?

PURCELL: I's say in the . . . in the . . . I'd say pretty close to the '60s before the . . . before the balance went . . . they produced more strip coal than they did underground.

WBP: O.K.

Now, when you were a young man and a miner, the coal you produced mainly went to railroads . . . went to Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad. Now, the railroads stopped using coal, who began to use the coal?

PURCELL: Well, that's . . . that's one . . . when the industry went down a lot when the railroads quit using coal.

WBP: Then after . . . then after . . .

PURCELL: Jackson Hill 6 used to operate on the open market so much. That's the reason they never worked in summertime. They used . . . they didn't have a contract so much when I first started there. It just depended on the open market. They'd get a better price for their coal and everything, see.

But then [when] they finally went to producing coal . . . it was for the railroads. They had a contract with the railroads for so many cars a week. And you would maybe get one or two days a week from that, and then whatever they could sell otherwise.

WBP: During your time as director of the Bureau of Mines, where did most of the Indiana coal go? Who bought the coal?

PURCELL: I really . . . I didn't know too much about the sale of the coal when I was . . . when I was working in the mines. I never thought too much about it -- but only as I could hear people talk, you know.

WBP: What about as director though at the Bureau?

PURCELL: Well, I never . . . that never entered into our . . .

WBP: Do you think it went to the power companies mainly?

PURCELL: Well, yes, the power companies took most of the coal.

WBP: O.K.

PURCELL: At least in Indiana.

WBP: Um hm.

PURCELL: Or anywhere, as far as that's concerned because they made power with the coal.

WBP: Um hm. O.K.

But the Depression hurt coal mining, too, some?  
The Depression closed coal mines down some?

PURCELL: President . . .

WBP: No, the Depression, the beginning . . .

PURCELL: Oh! Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There was a lot of  
mines that . . . they just didn't operate.

WBP: But at least you worked up to 1933 and you  
could have worked longer, if you'd wanted to.

PURCELL: Yes. Yeah.

WBP: What about mining towns? The cities . . . the  
communities in Vigo County that were owned primarily  
by the mining company?

PURCELL: The houses that sprung up right around the  
mine -- next door to the mine, you might say --  
were usually company houses. They'd build them  
for convenience so that they could have . . .  
especially some of their key men would be close.  
They could get 'em, you know, in case of emergency  
they could get 'em to come to work.

WBP: I see. Do you remember some . . . do you  
remember which of the mines had villages like this  
around them?

PURCELL: Yes. Pretty near all the Miami mines out  
around Caseyville and Ehrmandale and out in there,  
you know.

WBP: In Nevins township?

PURCELL: Yeah, in Nevins township. And they pretty  
near all had houses right close to the mines.  
And then Jackson Hill 6 had, I think it was, either  
three or four houses that employees lived in, as  
late as that was. But it'd begin to fall off then.  
They'd never . . . the trains that they'd run, and  
they'd take you to the mine. And then when auto-  
mobiles come on, they'd drive to the mine, you  
know, and all. And that's when the miners' blocks --  
they used to call "blocks" you know, the houses that  
was sprung up around the mines.

WBP:                Called housing "blocks"?

PURCELL:          Yeah.

WBP:                Are there any others you just kind of . . .  
you think about? Which were the largest mining  
villages or mining communities? Can you think of  
those?

PURCELL:          Well, Shirkieville was practically . . . they  
built around that mine because they had mines there  
for a number of years. It was two or three mines  
that they operated right there in Shirkieville.  
And that was primarily a mining town. And there  
was Sugar Valley and then was out from West Terre  
Haute. You see they, people who lived at West  
Terre Haute worked in them mines around there. And  
there was a little village out at Liggett.

WBP:                Yes.

PURCELL:          And . . . well, about all the mines back before  
the '50s and '60s, they was some houses would spring  
up. And it was . . . and mostly they was built by  
the coal companies for the convenience of the  
workers.

WBP:                During the 1950s and '60s it happened, too.

PURCELL:          Well, I'd say that it was maybe in a few  
places but mostly . . . . You see, when the auto-  
mobiles had come into being and then when the . . .  
as far back as 1918 there was a lot of the miners  
that went to the mines by trains. In 1918 at one  
time there were four miners' trains went out of  
Maple Avenue, and they had some 8 to 12 coaches  
and they were all loaded. That was during the war.  
I'd say that was about the peak of the mining  
industry.

WBP:                And they were going to the north and . . .

PURCELL:          And they just went on the Chicago, Milwaukee  
and St. Paul. And then there was one went south  
to Blackhawk. And there was one or two trains  
went east and there was one train went west.

WBP:                This is in 1918?

PURCELL:          Yeah. That was during the war.

WBP: O.K.

Would you say then that most of the mining in 1918 then was in Fayette and Sugar Creek townships? I mean up in this area, the northwest?

PURCELL: Oh, yeah, there was a lot of mines in that area, yeah.

WBP: The most productive ones in 1918 were about that?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: In that area.

PURCELL: And then . . . what's the other township up there? There's . . .

WBP: Name a town and I'll tell you what township.

PURCELL: Ooooooh. There's Fayette township.

WBP: That's way up where New Goshen is, Shirkieville.

PURCELL: Yeah. And then . . . then Sugar Creek township. That's over at West Terre Haute.

WBP: That's right.

PURCELL: And then you come on around . . . let's see. Is Otter Creek . . . comes . . .

WBP: Otter Creek is due north.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Nevins is northeast.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And Lost Creek is Seelyville.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And . . .

PURCELL: Well, there's a lot of mining around Lost Creek township, too. Around Seelyville.

WBP: All right.

PURCELL: Seelyville was known as quite a mining town.

WBP: And was there much mining going on up in Nevins township during your lifetime? Or was that all earlier?

PURCELL: Well, that was . . . no, not so much . . . not too much in Nevins township when I was director of Bureau of Mines. No. Mostly, #3 vein and the block coal.

WBP: When you were director, was there mining going on south of town?

PURCELL: Yes. The . . . oh, this mine right at . . . this new mine went in down there east . . . or west of Shelburn. It was the last new mine that was put down.

WBP: That's in Sullivan, right?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Sullivan County.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: O.K.

PURCELL: I can't even call the name of that mine, and I know it as well as I know my own.

WBP: It's interesting how that happens. The more recent things are harder to remember.

PURCELL: Yes, I have an awful time. I'll have a word on the end of my tongue and can't say it.

WBP: Blackhawk is in Pierson township. Was Blackhawk a mining town?

PURCELL: No. No and yes, it was . . . some miners lived there, but there was quite a few farmers, too, that settled around there.

WBP: What about Burnett up in . . .

PURCELL: Now, that was mostly mines, yes, mining town.

WBP: O.K. Was there a pretty sizable community around Tecumseh?

PURCELL: Yeah. There was a little community over there.

WBP: And that was because of what mine?

PURCELL: Well, the Green Valley or the Submarine . . . .

BREAK IN RECORDING

WBP: O.K. Let's see.

So, basically you're saying then that during the 1950s and '60s it's in the northwest and west of the city where most of the mining was going on during your time as director?

PURCELL: Um hm. Um hm.

WBP: Is that accurate?

PURCELL: Yeah, that . . . well now . . . there during the war -- right after I first come to Terre Haute -- there was miners' trains that went all directions. There were one or two went east. And there was . . . at least one went west and then this one went south to Blackhawk.

WBP: You're talking about World War I? Or World War II?

PURCELL: No, I'm talking about World War I.

And there was them four trains that carried from 8 to 12 coaches went out of . . . northwest. So most of the mining was done northwest of town.

WBP: O.K. That helps me to know that.

PURCELL: And then you see in Clinton, a lot of them reached the mines from Clinton by miners' train, too. There was a miners' train come south out of Clinton to some of these mines.

WBP: Uh-huh. I've heard that.

PURCELL: Jackson Hill 5 was along there and Miami 9 and all . . . well, the Miamis had several mines -- Miami 9, Miami 10. There were different . . . there was a lot of mines up in there.

WBP: O.K.

Who in this county who still lives here would be able to talk about the mines and coal mining in Vigo County? Do you know some people that are still alive who . . .

PURCELL: Well, ol' Alec Lawson, he's over a 100 years old.

WBP: Alec Lawson? He lives up on where?

PURCELL: Fourth Avenue.

WBP: Fourth Avenue. All right.

Who else?

PURCELL: I just can't think of anybody offhand. Pete Shull. That's a fellow that my brother worked with. He worked around the mines quite a bit. He's an old-timer. I expect . . . that's about it! I can't think of any real old guys that's still around.

WBP: O.K.

Shirkieville, I guess, was known as an Italian community because of the miners who lived up there and worked in the mine. It was right in the center of coal-mining area. Were there other communities that had specific nationalities, people from specific nations and . . .

PURCELL: Not to my knowledge. Now, there used to be a . . . well, there was a place up close to Clinton there, one area of Clinton they called Little Italy. And that was mostly Italian but it was still . . . they were mixed even in there.

WBP: Which was the . . . which of the mining companies were the biggest mining companies during your time as director of mines, Bureau of Mines? Biggest companies, not just the mine?

PURCELL: Walter Bledsoe had several mines and was very prominent in that he had the Saxon mine, the Viking mine, and the . . . Well, the Green Valley was a pretty good-sized mine.

WBP: Did Bledsoe have that?

PURCELL: Who?

WBP: Bledsoe did not have the Green . . .

PURCELL: I don't know whether Bledsoe had it. I think he did. I'm not sure but I think he had an interest in that.

WBP: O.K.

There was a . . . there were the Templetons.  
Did they have mines?

PURCELL: Yeah. They had . . . they was very prominent here. They've been . . . oh, the Snow Hill mine . . . or the Green . . . Talleydale. I think they . . . no, the Talleys run that mine. Templeton mines is mostly south.

WBP: Um hm. O.K. All right.

Was there any mining in Prairie Creek township?  
Do you know?

PURCELL: In what?

WBP: Prairie Creek township . . .

PURCELL: Prairie Creek, yeah.

WBP: . . . down south of . . .

PURCELL: Not very many down in that way that I remember of. In Prairie Creek.

WBP: What about Linton?

PURCELL: Linton?

WBP: Linton township?

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: Were there mines down there?

PURCELL: Yeah, they had some mines around there. They was . . . they were smaller mines. There wasn't any big mines only there here (laughs) . . . . Started to say the name of that doggoned mine now. Isn't that awful?

WBP: It's O.K. I understand.

PURCELL: It was . . . it was put down while I was . . . it came into being while I was in the Bureau of Mines. And it's worked out since that.

WBP: O.K.

And West Terre Haute was a kind of a mining . . . a lot of miners lived in West Terre Haute.

PURCELL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, it was practically all miners lived in West Terre Haute.

WBP: Well, where'd those miners work?

PURCELL: Well, they worked around them mines around there. There was two mines just north on U.S. Highway 150, right along there where that brick yard was, you know. And then there was some more off to the left. The Wabash mine was over there. And they was . . . and then there was one south, the National mine, and the mine that produced coal for the South plant Vigo Ordnance, it was . . . people that lived in West Terre Haute worked there a lot.

WBP: And this was during what time period?

PURCELL: Hmm?

WBP: During what time period would that be?

PURCELL: Well, the mine that produced coal for this South plant went down about the time that I went in the Bureau of Mines because Bill Sharp was one of my inspectors, and he worked at that mine. He was out of a job and he took the job as one of my inspectors.

WBP: O.K.

WBP: Well, you've seen a lot of coal mining history.  
Has there been labor violence in your memory?

PURCELL: Nooo. I never seen too much labor violence.  
There would be . . . if there'd be a strike, why  
they'd act up a little bit, but I never witnessed  
very much labor violence. There's been a lot down  
at this Dixie Bee mine down here. They had some  
shootin' and all going on down there and up at  
Bunsen, or Universal. They was some mines there,  
you know. That's where that stripper is now.  
They're stripping out coal over there.

WBP: At Universal?

PURCELL: Yeah, Universal. But . . . and there was  
some . . . but that's when the most of the trouble  
was, when they'd have strikes.

WBP: Why didn't Indiana Coal . . . why wasn't  
that used in the steel industry in Gary?

PURCELL: Oh, it was, a lot of it.

WBP: Oh, it was?

PURCELL: Oh, yes.

WBP: For coking?

PURCELL: Yeah. The steel mills was a big user of coal.

WBP: From this area? From Indiana?

PURCELL: I don't know whether . . . how much of it come  
from Indiana but I know they was . . .

WBP: They use coal.

PURCELL: They use coal.

WBP: I had understood that they did not use Indiana  
coal but rather they used Pennsylvania and West  
Virginia coal.

PURCELL: Yeah.

WBP: And that Indiana coal was not used and therefore  
that was a possible market that was lost.

WBP:           What do you think the effect of highly-unionized labor was on the coal industry of Indiana?

PURCELL:       About what now?

WBP:           The fact that the . . . what was the effect of the fact that the UMW was so strong in Indiana? Did that . . .

PURCELL:       I don't think that had too much to do with the production -- because it was union.

WBP:           Did it make it more expensive than non-union coal?

PURCELL:       Well, it does in a way but the . . . we just never had too much non-union coal in Indiana that I can remember.

WBP:           I know. I know.

PURCELL:       There've been several small . . . but it was mostly smaller operations -- some little family affairs or something like that, you know, that they would be.

WBP:           But did Indiana lose markets then to other states that had non-union-produced coal?

PURCELL:       Well, I expect they would, you know, where they produced this non-union coal. They'd probably lose some business from that source.

WBP:           Well, I want to thank you for this. This has been a delightful and very informative interview. And as you think of things, I'll be happy to talk with you again.

PURCELL:       O.K. That'll be all right.

WBP:           Because this is all extremely valuable for the historical record.

PURCELL:       Um hm. Well, I . . . as I told that fellow that interviewed me on the People magazine, what do they call that magazine? They call it the People?

WBP:           PM magazine? Is it television?

PURCELL: No, it's . . .

WBP: Or People magazine?

PURCELL: People's magazine.

WBP: O.K.

PURCELL: Coal People! Coal People!

WBP: Coal People?

PURCELL: Coal People. He interviewed me down there at the Mining Institute last spring. And they run my picture in the magazine then. I don't know, a month or two after that.

And I told him that I'd seen a lot of changes in the coal mine . . . coal field. And I have, a lot of changes.

WBP: Were the changes good or bad?

PURCELL: Well, they . . . well, from the standpoint of working, they've been bad. You know, we used to have more work than they are now. And from the other standpoint of the improvement in mines, why it's been good. I've seen the wash houses come into being and I've seen (laughs) all those things happen. And I've worked under the conditions where they had no wash houses, too; and I know what that is.

WBP: Well, thank you very much.

PURCELL: Well . . .

WBP: Mr. Purcell.

PURCELL: . . . maybe we can get together sometime again.

WBP: O.K.

END OF TAPE 2

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